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No. 50.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 19, 1900.

Price 5 Cents.

THREE CHUMS' "FIVE";

OR

THE CRACK BASKET BALL TEAM.

BY HARRY MOORE.



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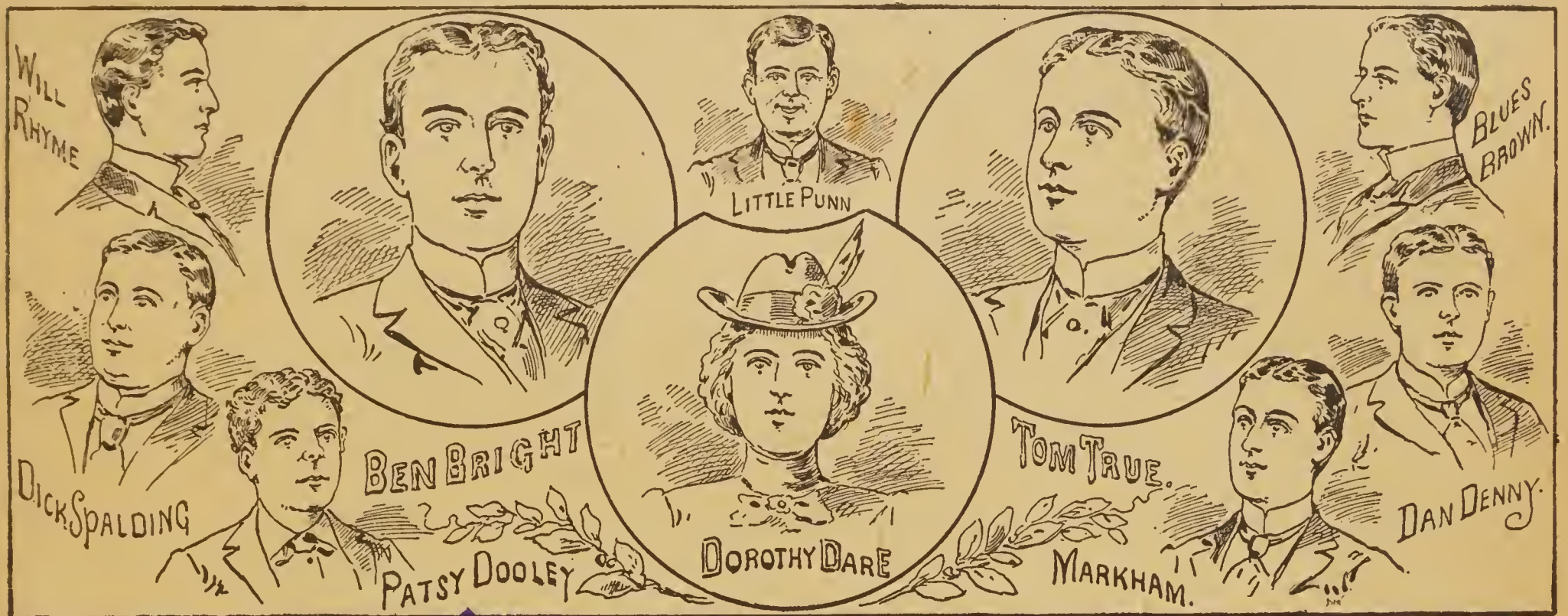
A Weekly Story of the Adventures of Two Boys and a Girl.

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CHAPTER I.

THE END OF THE HOLIDAYS.

"Well, the Christmas holidays are over, fellows."

"Yes, Ben; to-morrow we return to our studies at Columbia College."

In a room in an apartment house on Amsterdam avenue, in North New York, not far from Morningside Heights, on which is situated Columbia College, were eleven youths.

The first speaker was Ben Bright, a handsome, manly-looking youth of not quite eighteen years, and the second

speaker was Tom True, his chum; the other nine youths were friends of those two.

The youths were all students at Columbia, and all had rooms in the apartment house, and they were in the habit of gathering in the parlor of the suite of rooms occupied by Ben and Tom, of evenings, and here discussing whatever of interest came up.

"I hope you all enjoyed yourselves during the holidays?" remarked Ben.

"I did!" cried Little Pun, a lively little chap, who always was ready to have fun.

"And I," from Dick Spalding, a regular young giant of a fellow, good-natured and indolent in appearance, most of the time, but he could, on occasion, be as wide awake and

lively as any of them, and he was a dangerous customer when aroused, for the reason that he was as strong as a giant.

"I didn't know my home folks did care so much for me till I went home! They made over me until I was afraid I would get the swell head so badly it would burst!"

"I never enjoyed the Christmas holidays so much in my life, Ben. From the dinner down at Mr. and Mrs. Hinkle's on Christmas day, till this evening I have enjoyed myself immensely."

Thus spoke Heber Markham, Pinky Sweet, Will Rhyme, Blues Brown, Ralph Peters, Wash Dickinson and Zack Sparks.

"I'm glad you all enjoyed the holidays," said Ben. "Tom and I enjoyed them very much. We had Dan Denny, Patsy Dooley, Arthur Black, Homer Sells and Wilbur Wheelock with us, here, you know, while you were gone."

"Say, I'll wager that Denny and Patsy enjoyed themselves, all right!" laughed Little Punn. "Did they get into any scrapes downtown?"

"No, I think not; if they did, I didn't hear about it," smiled Ben.

"Well, you'd have heard about it from Patsy!" with a grin. "He's a great Irishman, isn't he!"

"Yes; Patsy is all right," replied Ben.

"And Denny's all right, too, ugly as he is!" said Brown.

"Well, if I were you, Brown, I don't think I would say anything about any one being ugly!" said Little Punn. "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones, you know."

"I don't outclass you any in that respect," growled Brown. "Even your own folks said you were getting homelier than you used to be, and you were homely enough before. We, having been with you right along, had not noticed it so much, but they noticed it at once."

Little Punn groaned, and shook his head solemnly.

"Brownie! Brownie!" he murmured; "you are certainly the finest liar that ever came down the pike! I would take off my hat to you, if I had one on to take off! You are an artist! My folks never said anything of the kind, but I heard your girl say, that night at the ball, you know, that you were the ugliest chap she ever saw, and that she wondered they allowed you to appear on the streets in the daytime, in New York. She said that there was certainly danger of your frightening little children to death. I, myself, fail to see how you manage to sleep of nights, and why you are not afraid of yourself!"

"Oh, go 'long. My girl never said anything of the kind, for the very good reason that I haven't any girl!"

"You'd like to have!"

"That's all you know about it!"

"Well, wouldn't you? Own up, now, Brownie! Be honest, for once in your life!"

"I think it is horse and horse with you two fellows," drawled Spalding. "You would both like to have girls, but you are so homely that none of them will have anything to do with you. If you were as handsome as yours truly, now, you would be all right!"

"Yes, we would—I don't think!" sneered Little Punn. "No girls would care for a fellow whose feet were so big she could not get close enough to him to get hold of his arm when out walking with him."

"You, you little runt, my feet are not large!"

"Oh, no—not very! Do you know, Spaldy, that if I had feet like yours, I would knock the heels off my shoes, hitch horses to the toes and go sleigh-riding every time it snows!"

"You'll go sliding downstairs on your ear, if you don't look out, Punny!" growled Spalding, and Little Punn laughed gleefully, while taking care to keep well out of reach of the big fellow's long arm.

"When did the fellows go away, Ben?" asked Markham.

"Black, Sells and Wheelock went away day before yesterday, but Patsy and Dan did not leave till this morning."

"Then you and Tom have not been alone long enough to get lonesome," said Little Punn.

"Oh, no," the youths replied. "We were down to Mr. and Mrs. Hinkle's to-day. Dorothy and Mamie spent the holidays there, you know—with the exception of a couple of days, which they spent at Mamie's home in Mount Vernon."

Dorothy Dare and Mamie Blair were students at Barnard College, which is the Columbia College for girls, and it is only just across the street from Columbia. Dorothy Dare was an orphan, and so were Ben Bright and Tom True, and Ben's father had been the guardian of Tom and Dorothy, and when he had died the three had, in accordance with the request of Ben's father, made in a letter left for Ben, become "three chums." They had decided to stick together, to be "all for one and one for all," and up to the present time, more than a year later, they had done so, and were practically attending the same college, as Columbia College is a co-educational institution, the girls being in a separate building—Barnard College—that is all, and in the last year of their course they come to Columbia College to study, and listen to the lectures. Mamie Blair was Dorothy's girl chum, and the two thought they could not possibly get along without each other.

"Well, to-morrow it is get to work again!" said Peters, with such a doleful expression that the others laughed.

"Are you dreading it, Peters?" asked Tom.

"A little," was the reply. "It seems pretty tough to have to go to work after having had such a jolly good time for the past ten days."

"That ought to make it all the easier to get back to work," smiled Ben. "If we had not had any enjoyment during the holidays, it would seem much harder to go back to work again, don't you think?"

"I suppose it would; but it's hard enough, as it is."

"The holidays! The holidays! .

We're glad when they have come;

But when they've gone (they don't stay long),

To get to work's no fun!"

murmured Will Rhyme, and this seemed to strike the rest as being about applicable to the situation, for they clapped their hands.

"You've hit it off about right, Rhymesey!" said Little Punn. "To get to work is no fun, sure enough—especially for fellows who are naturally dull, as is the case with Brownie, here."

"Never you mind about Brownie!" growled that worthy. "He can keep right along with you, runty, and he doesn't have to grind very hard to do it, either!"

"Well, you see, that's because I stay back on purpose. I promised your folks that I wouldn't run away from you, and leave you to struggle alone in the ruck, and I am a man of my word. I keep it, no matter what transpires. Now I could be away up in the front ranks, if I chose to exert myself, and was willing to leave you; but I won't do it, Brownie, don't be alarmed. I shall stick right by you!"

"Thanks!" drily. "I am not afraid but what you will do that. At any rate, I am not afraid of your pulling ahead and leaving me."

"Oh, Brown and Punny quarrel much,

And, as in the case of twins;

So very nearly matched are they,

It's hard to tell which wins."

"That's where you are dead wrong, Rhymesey!" protested Little Punn. "It is not at all difficult to tell which wins. In fact, I always win! The fellows will tell you that."

"In your mind, you always win!" sneered Brown. "You are one of those fellows who dream and have visions of great victories and achievements."

"I never dream, nowadays at least," the little chap said. "I used to dream, but I invented a dream-preventer, and used it for awhile and completely cured myself. I would recommend that you get one and use it, Brownie. You might get that faraway look out of your eyes, then."

"You say you invented a dream-preventer, Punny?" asked Spalding, an interested look in his eyes. "What kind of a thing was it, anyway. I have dreams till you can't rest, and——"

"Till you can't rest, you mean," the little chap interrupted. "I rest all right."

"Till I can't rest, then. Say, is your dream-preventer any good?"

"Is it? Well, I should remark yes! It is sure death to the dreaming habit, every time. Like many kinds of good medicines, however, it is not the nicest in the world to the taste, but results are all that can be desired."

"What is it like?"

"Oh, it's very simple. I just took a couple of pieces of common fence board, got a lot of wire nails, drove the nails through the boards at a distance of about an inch from one another, and then nailed the boards together so that they formed two sides of a triangle—something after the fashion of a pig-trough, only I did not close up the ends; I fastened straps to the boards, and then, at night, before going to bed, I strapped the dream-preventer to my back. People who dream usually lie on their backs, and this invention of mine was calculated to put a stop to that. As long as I lay quietly on my side, the invention did not bother me to speak of, but as soon as I would doze off and go to roll over onto my back, in order to get to work at my old trick of dreaming, the nails would jab me in forty-seven different places, and I would very quickly turn back onto my side again. It only took about a week to cure me of lying on my back when I sleep, and now I rarely, if ever dream."

Spalding and the youths had listened to the description of Little Punn's dream-preventer with considerable interest, but when he had finished, Spalding shook his head.

"I beg to be excused!" he said. "The cure is worse than the disease. If I have to depend on your invention to be cured of the dream habit, Punny, I will go on through life a dreamer! I draw the line at having my anatomy punctured by ten-penny fencing nails!"

"Oh, they won't hurt you, Spaldy," the little chap declared. "You know, yourself, that iron is good for the blood!"

"That may be," responded Spalding, "but I don't want the iron administered in that fashion."

"You say you invented this thing, and that it will keep you from lying on your back, Punny?" asked Brown.

"That's what I said, Brownie; and it's what I did, too."

"Hum! I was just wondering, Punny, if you couldn't invent something that would keep you from lying when you are sitting or standing. That would be a great thing, and you need something of the kind, badly——"

"But not half so badly as you do, Brownie! I've been thinking of trying to invent something of the kind, for your benefit, and unless you reform of your own accord, I shall try to do something of the kind, one of these days."

"That's all right; you need it worse than anybody else I know of, however."

"I don't believe!"

"By the way, Punny, did you have your dream-preventer patented?" asked Markham.

"No; I thought I would pose as a philanthropist and a benefactor of mankind, so I did not apply for a patent. I thought that all who wished to use the dream-preventer could have made one free, save the amount paid the carpenter who does the job."

"What a generous-hearted little chap you are, Punny!" said Spalding, with lazy sarcasm. "Not many persons would be willing to give up a sure fortune in that manner, just for the good of their fellow men! Shake, Punny; you are a youth of noble and generous impulses!"

But Little Punn stuck both hands behind him, and shook his head.

"Oh, no, thank you!" he said. "I have had the ex-squeeze-it—as the French do not say—pleasure of shaking hands with you in the past, Spaldy, and I beg to be excused. I claim the right to do with your hand as you did with my dream-preventer—refuse to accept it, with thanks for the proffer!"

"Oh, all right," said Spalding, with a good-natured grin. "Suit yourself, Punny."

"I always try to do that, old man."

"Yes; he doesn't care whether any one else is suited or not!" said Brown. "He's looking out for number one all the time!"

"And I am A Number One, all the time, too, Brownie!"

"I thought you were A. Little Punn!" insinuated Rhyme, whereat Little Punn sniffed contemptuously, while the other youths laughed.

The youths talked and jested awhile longer, and then Tom said:

"Say, fellows, what do you say to going down to Saint Nicholas Rink, and spend the evening skating?"

"I say let's do it!" cried Peters.

"Here, too!" from Little Punn. "I am the champion skater of the United States and Hoboken!"

"I should enjoy an hour's exercise on the ice," said Ben.

"Oh, we're going!" cried Little Punn. "Wait till I get my skates."

All the youths were in favor of the proposition, so they donned their overcoats and were soon en route to the rink.

CHAPTER II.

AN IMPROMPTU RACE.

It was a lively and inspiring scene that greeted the visions of the youths when they reached St. Nicholas Rink.

The big rink was covered with skaters, and the ring of the steel runners on the ice made sweet music to the ears of those who enjoyed skating, and made those who had not yet donned skates eager to do so.

"Say, this is all right, isn't it?" said Little Punn, his eyes sparkling as he took in the scene. "This is indeed something like it!"

"It is, for a fact, Punny!" said Markham.

The youths stood and watched the skaters for awhile, they being in no particular hurry, and presently the skaters drew well out to the side of the rink, and a lithe, graceful-appearing fellow came out into the middle of the space and began doing some fancy skating. He was very good at this, and did some intricate figure work that earned for him considerable applause.

"Who is he, I wonder?" asked Tom True.

"I don't know, Tom," replied Ben, who, being a fine fancy skater himself, as well as a remarkably speedy one, was watching the fellow's work, closely. "He is a good one, whoever he is."

"That is Don Walcott, the champion of New England," volunteered a man who stood near. "He is a very speedy skater, and is thought to be invincible in fancy work."

"Mr. Don Walcott is all right," said Little Punn; "but if he thinks he can come over here from rock-ribbed, iron-bound old New England and teach we New Yorkers anything, he is away out of his reckoning! I can just outskate any New Englander that ever happened, and I shall hasten to challenge him to a test of both speed and skill—I mean speed and skill!"

"If you mean to challenge him to a test of speed and skill with the mouth, you certainly have him beaten!"

sneered Brown. "He would be the same as tied to a post, alongside of you! But as for skating, I don't believe you can skate at all."

"You don't, eh?"

"I do not."

"Bah! You're judging me by yourself! You think that because you can't skate, I can't; but that's where you are fooled. Just wait till you see me out there with a pair of skates on! You will open your eyes in wonder, then!"

"I don't doubt that. But it won't be wonder at your good skating."

"You think not, eh?"

"That's what I think. I'll wager something that you don't even know how to put a pair of skates on!"

"You will?"

"I will."

"How much will you wager?"

"A dollar."

"A paltry dollar—faugh! I never bet less than a thousand dollars. If you wish to risk that amount, why——"

"Dry up! You haven't any thousand dollars, and if you had, you would not bet it, for you know you would lose it."

"I don't know anything of the kind. I know you would lose yours; but I don't want your money. I'll get a pair of skates and show you that I know a thing or two, however."

Just then a great burst of applause went up. The fancy skater had finished his work, and was now leading the crowd 'round and 'round, skating with easy grace and dexterity, and keeping ahead without seemingly exerting himself in the least, while those behind were straining every nerve, and skating as if their lives depended on their efforts.

"Well, let's don skates and have some sport, along with the rest," said Ben, and the youths all secured skates, and were soon at work, clamping them on.

Ben was the first to get his skates adjusted, and he stepped onto the ice and glided away in advance of the group of skaters, who were still chasing along, doing their best to keep up with Walcott, the New England champion.

A smile crossed the face of the New Englander as he saw Ben start out in front of him, and he increased his speed, and began drawing up on the youth. Evidently he thought Ben was some youth with a high opinion of his expertness on skates, and he was as evidently bent on taking the conceit out of the youth.

Ben skated along, easily and gracefully. If anything, he was even more graceful in appearance than Walcott, and his strokes were neater and cleaner. He was utterly oblivious of his surroundings, and had no idea that Walcott

was trying to overtake him, until that worthy ranged alongside him. He had no thought of engaging in a race with the fellow, so was not only surprised, but was, naturally, angered when Walcott shot out in front, and with a backward look, over his shoulder, and a sneering smile, said:

"Now come on, young fellow, and I'll give you a lesson in skating!"

A peculiar, steely glint shot into Ben's eyes. He compressed his lips.

"Oh, will you?" he said to himself. "All right; since you wish it, we'll see about it!"

Then Ben shot forward, with a peculiar, plunging stroke that forced him to full speed almost with the first stroke, and in a twinkling, almost, he was even with Walcott, having taken the inside, as he was able easily to do, coming from the rear, as he had.

Neither said a word. It was not necessary. Walcott was smart enough to know what Ben's actions meant, and he realized, too, that he had caught a Tartar, and that he would have no soft snap on his hands, if he defeated this lithe and graceful youth.

"By Jove!" he thought; "I wonder if I've made a mistake? I never saw any one save a professional who could get under way like that, almost at a jump! I'll have to watch the kid, and do some good skating."

While these thoughts were passing through his brain, Walcott was skating with all his might, in an effort to leave Ben behind. To his surprise, he was unable to do so, however, the youth keeping right alongside him, and the New Englander knitted his eyebrows, and set his teeth, for he began to realize that it was going to be a struggle.

The spectators had awakened to the realization that a contest was on, by this time, and all was excitement.

"Get out of the way, there, you lobsters!" cried Little Punn, excitedly, almost falling off a bench, onto which he had climbed so as to enable him to see over the heads of some people in front of him; "get off the ice, and give 'em a chance. What's the matter with you? Do you want to spoil a good race? Get out of the way, and see Ben Bright do the gentleman from New England up!"

"That's right!" a big, leather-lunged fellow bawled. "Get off the ice, or off the earth—get out of the way, anyhow, and let 'em have room to race! It's going to be a race for your whiskers!"

The other skaters hastily scrambled off the ice, and took refuge on the seats around the side of the rink, and in a few moments only Ben and Walcott were left on the ice, and they were going 'round and 'round at such a swift gait as to almost make the heads of the spectators dizzy.

"Jove! but they're going at it, aren't they?" exclaimed Tom. "I did not know that Ben could skate like that!"

"I did!" declared Little Punn, with great earnestness. "I never saw him skate, but he can do anything, and do it better than nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand, so I knew he could skate like that; and I'm open to wager any amount from ten cents up to ten hundred dollars that he will beat the gent from the Plymouth Rock country, and beat him bad!"

"Punny is not far out of the way," said Markham. "To date, we have never found anything that Ben was not only good at, but a master at it. He is holding his own easily, and can, I think, jump out and leave Walcott behind whenever he makes up his mind to do so."

"I think so!" said Spalding. "He has a beautiful stroke!"

"And just like clockwork!" said an enthusiastic outsider. "Your friend is all right!"

"He certainly is!" coincided Little Punn, and then he yelled:

"Bright! Bright! Three cheers for Ben Bright!"

And to the surprise of the youths, the majority of those present joined them in the cheers they gave for Ben. The handsome face and graceful and manly bearing of the youth had impressed them in his favor. Then, too, Walcott was a professional, while Ben was an amateur, and the sympathies of a crowd are usually with the amateur, when an amateur and a professional come together in any kind of a contest.

There were those among the spectators who did not wish to see Ben win, however. It so happened that Lincoln Sanders, Geoffrey Marvin, and their usual gang, including Henry Dudley, Don Ross, Dick Wilton and Bert Rogers were present, and these youths did not want Ben to win. They were sophomores, of Columbia College, and they disliked Ben on account of the fact that he had taken a leading place in the field of athletics, even though a freshman, and had been given Marvin's place on the football eleven, and had defeated Sanders in a number of contests, Sanders having been the undisputed champion in most things requiring strength and agility before Ben came to the college. The other four youths, while not aspiring to anything particular in the field of athletics, were close friends and chums of the other two, and disliked Ben because the two leaders did.

"At last!" exclaimed Sanders, with a look of satisfaction on his dark face: "I think Ben Bright has run up against some one who will be able to defeat him! Walcott is a professional, and ought to be able to dispose of him easily."

"He'll do it, all right!" cried Marvin, jubilantly. "He'll take your Mr. Ben Bright into camp, all right, and I am glad to know that such is going to be the case! I hate Ben Bright, and I don't care who knows it nor do I care who knows that I hope he will be defeated!"

"I don't see how he could possibly win from Walcott," said Don Ross. "Walcott is the champion skater of New England, and no fellow like Ben Bright can beat him."

"Well, fellows," said Bert Rogers, quietly, "if you will listen to me, I will tell you something. 'I don't like Ben Bright, myself, but I know what he has done in the past, know and realize his abilities, and I have also been watching him since this little race started, and I will say this, that if Walcott beats him he will have to work, and work hard. Bright is holding him level, and the New Englander seems to be doing his best, too, so it simmers down to a question of endurance.'"

"I think you are wrong about that, Bert," said Henry Dudley. "I think that Walcott will be able to leave Ben Bright behind whenever he gets ready to do so."

"Well, I don't, but as there is no way of proving that either is right, we will just have to wait and see how it ends."

"Ben Bright does seem to be holding Walcott safe," said Sanders, a dark look coming over his heavy countenance. "I don't think, however, that Bright can possibly beat a man at his own game, and that man a professional, at that."

"I don't say he will beat Walcott," said Rogers; "but I do say that Walcott will have to work hard if he beats Bright, and I'll stand by the statement."

The race was now waxing warm. The two skaters had circled 'round and 'round a score of times, and were going at a terrific rate of speed. Ben was sure his opponent was doing his best, and he was simply holding the inside track by the simple trick of keeping a foot in advance of the other. Being on the inside, Ben, of course, had not quite so far to go in making the circuit as did his opponent, and if he had been possessed of exactly equal speed, he could have held his own, and defeated the other in the end, but Ben felt sure that he was the faster skater of the two, and as for endurance, Ben could have skated all night. The youth had sized Walcott up closely, and was sure he could defeat him.

"This affair was not of my seeking," the youth thought: "but now that I am into it, I am going to win if I can. I know the fellows want me to win, and I would hate to be beaten on their account more than on my own."

"Then I saw Sanders, Marvin and the rest of their crowd up there, as we came in, and I would not let them have

the satisfaction of seeing me beaten for anything. I must win! I will win!"

Then half-turning his head and speaking back over his shoulder Ben said:

"There is no need of our skating here all night. We can settle this thing as well in a few minutes as in an hour. Supposing we make ten more circuits of the rink, and let whichever one is in the lead then be the winner? What do you say?"

"I'm willing," was the reply, in a fierce growl, and as they reached the side of the rink next to the entrance, Ben called out:

"We will go the circuit ten more times, and the leader will be the winner!"

Instantly a cheer went up, and the people became wildly excited, as they realized that the finish of the race was close at hand.

"Go it, Ben, old man!" yelled Little Punn, as they came around the next time. "Go it! You can beat him!"

And go it, both the skaters certainly did, for they seemed to sail around the rink like swallows. It was a close race, and a pretty one, but Ben was not extending himself, and when they started on the last circuit he suddenly spurted, and pulled steadily away from his opponent, although the latter made herculean efforts to hold him, and came around and crossed the line a winner by twenty feet, amid the wildest kind of cheering and rejoicing from the majority of those present in the rink.

CHAPTER III.

A MATCH IS ARRANGED.

"Ben Bright wins!" shrieked Little Punn. "Three cheers for Ben Bright!" and the cheers were given with a will.

"Now the college yell!" the little chap shrieked, and on the air rose the yell:

"H'ray! h'ray! h'ray! C-o-l-u-m-b-i-a!"

"For it was a Columbia man who won!" Little Punn yelled, when the cheering had ceased. "Ben Bright is a Columbia student, and a freshman. Hurrah for the freshman class of Columbia College!"

It so happened that a number of freshmen were present, and they gave the cheer with a great vigor and enthusiasm.

"Curse the luck!" grated Marvin. "Did you ever see the like in all your life? That fellow, Bright, has the fiend's

own luck. There is no such thing as defeating him at anything, so long as his luck sticks by him!"

"There may have been some luck mixed in with that affair—though I didn't see it," said Bert Rogers, quietly; "but to my mind Ben Bright's victory was due more to good skating than to luck."

"He is certainly a fine skater," acknowledged Lincoln Sanders, though his face was dark with anger and disappointment at the success of the youth in winning from the New England crack.

As for Ben's immediate friends and chums, they were wild with delight, though the majority were more moderate in their demonstrations of it than Little Punn.

Tom, Spalding, Markham and the rest had hastened down to the edge of the ice, and when Ben came around after the end of the race, it having been impossible for him to stop sooner, they caught hold of him, and shook his hands and congratulated him warmly, Tom fairly hugging his chum, so delighted was he.

"We knew you could beat him, old man!" he said. "We were sure of it from the first. Jove! but you did him up in good shape!"

"But he can't do it again!" cried an angry voice, and looking around, the youths saw Walcott standing beside them, his face angry, his eyes glowing redly, for he was terribly cut up over having been beaten by one whom he considered a mere boy and a rank amateur.

"Yes, he can do it again—and again—and again!" retorted Little Punn, who had followed the rest down to where Ben stood, and heard what the fellow said. "He did it once, fairly and squarely, and he can repeat the dose, if necessary."

"I wasn't talking to you!" the New Englander snarled. "I am talking to this young man," and he indicated Ben. "I can beat you, under circumstances that give me an equal opportunity!" he continued, "and I challenge you to meet me in a match race, for five hundred or a thousand dollars!"

"Do you mean to say he didn't beat you fairly?" almost hissed Tom, turning upon Walcott like a tiger. "If you say that, you——"

"Easy, Tom!" said Ben, laying his hand on his chum's shoulder. "I know what Mr. Walcott means. In the race just over, I had the inside track, which in a small place like this rink, is a big advantage. That is what you had reference to, isn't it, sir?"

"That is what I meant," was the reply, in a milder tone, for Ben's words showed the fellow that he was dealing with a youth who was fair-minded and not at all bigoted. He had been afraid Ben would claim he had beaten him easily,

and brag about it, and refuse to give him another chance. To do the fellow justice, he thought that he could defeat Ben without much difficulty in a straightaway course, and if he could get a match with the youth, he would not care so much for the defeat he had just experienced. He could wipe it out when they met in the straightaway race.

"And you think you can beat me in a race over a straightaway course?" asked Ben, pleasantly.

"I do!" the fellow declared.

"You can't do it!" muttered Tom.

"Not in a thousand years!" murmured Little Punn.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Ben; "I am not a betting man, at all—I do not believe in betting—so will not make a wager with you, but I will give you a match, if you like, and race you for fun."

A sneer curled Waleott's lips. He jumped to the conclusion that Ben felt that he would be beaten in a straightaway match, and feared to bet on that account. So he said:

"It is handy to have conscientious scruples against betting, sometimes! It saves money!"

"You mean by that that you think I am afraid I will be beaten, I suppose?" remarked Ben, coldly.

"That is what I mean!" was the prompt reply.

"Why, you imperti——" began Tom, but Ben stopped him with a gesture.

"Hold, Tom!" he said; then to Waleott:

"If you think that the reason I will not bet is because I am afraid of losing my money, you are mistaken. I never bet. I will race you, but only for fun."

"But I often bet!" exclaimed Little Punn, and pulling a roll of banknotes as big as his wrist out of his pocket, the little chap moved around and stuck the roll under Waleott's nose.

"Smell of that!" he said. "There is a thousand dollars in that roll, and I'll bet you the whole amount that Ben can beat you skating! I'll bet you more, if you like—say two, three or five thousand dollars! There is nothing small about me, but me! Put up or shut up!"

The man saw that the little chap was in earnest, and he colored up, and hesitated. He seemed debating something in his mind, and those standing near and watching him guessed that he was trying to make up his mind what sum to wager. Finally he said:

"I am not rich, by any means, so I think the one thousand will be as much as I care to bet. I haven't the money with me, but will meet you anywhere you say, to-morrow, and will deposit the one thousand dollars with any responsible man, to hold until after the race."

"All right; that is satisfactory," said Little Punn. "The thousand dollar bet goes."

"Where shall I meet you, to-morrow?"

"Oh, any place. Wherever you say."

"How will it do to meet here at the rink?"

"That will suit me."

"Very good. At what hour can you come?"

"In the evening; say at seven o'clock."

"That suits me, as I will be here at that hour, anyway, doing fancy skating."

"I'll be here at seven, then."

"And who'll hold the stakes?"

"It doesn't matter to me, so he is responsible. How will the manager of the rink do?"

"He will suit me."

"Very well; we will put the money in his hands, then." Then the New Englander turned to Ben.

"I suppose you will not refuse to race because a friend of yours is willing to bet on you?" he asked.

Ben smiled.

"Oh, no;" he replied; "not that I approve of my friends betting, and least of all, of their betting on me, but if they wish to do so, I cannot prevent them; and I will go ahead and race you, just the same as though no money had been wagered."

"Very good. I'm glad of that! And, now, where shall the race be held, and when?"

"How would next Saturday afternoon suit you?" asked Ben.

"Very well. At what hour?"

"That is immaterial; save that it will have to be before it is beginning to get dark in the evening."

"Three o'clock?"

"That hour will suit me."

"And where will we race?"

"I have no choice of places. Wherever you say."

"There are many nice little lakes in the vicinity of New York, I understand, where the race could be held. Can you name one?"

"What distance will we race?" asked Ben.

"I don't know, and it makes no difference to me. I have no preference as to distance. I'll let you choose the distance."

"How will one mile suit you?"

"That suits me all right; and it is a very good distance, too. It is far enough to give the spectators a chance to see it, and also long enough to be a test in both speed and endurance. I will agree to a mile, if it is satisfactory to you."

"I think a mile race is long enough."

"All right; that is settled, then. Now where can we

find a nice little lake, a mile long—or rather, enough over a mile long so that we can get a mile straightaway?"

Ben pondered a few moments.

"There is a nice little lake up at Kensico, on the Harlem branch of the New York Central," he said, presently. "The lake is close to the station, and we can get a mile course, straightaway, on it, I am confident."

"How far away?"

"Oh, thirty miles or so—just about an hour from the Grand Central Station, I should judge."

"That will be all right."

"I think so."

"Yes; and we'll call it a go, if you say so."

"It suits me. I am confident we will be able to get a nice course for the race, up there."

"All right; we will call it settled, then. Now, let's see: We are to race next Saturday."

"Yes."

"The distance to be one mile, straightaway."

"Yes."

"The race is to start at three o'clock."

"Yes."

"And is to take place at Kensico Lake, near Kensico, one hour from New York, on the Harlem branch of the New York Central."

"That is as I understand it."

"Very well. That settles the entire matter, I guess. To reach the point where the race is to take place, we should leave the city by half-past one, should we not?"

"Yes; or at one. It is better to be too early than too late, you know."

"True. Well, I'll be there ready to start at three o'clock, all right, anyway!"

"And, barring unavoidable detentions, so will I!"

"Let's see the manager of the rink, and see if he will be willing to hold stakes for us," said Little Punn, and Walcott agreed.

The manager was near at hand, and readily agreed to hold stakes, and then, at Walcott's suggestion, he got up on a bench and announced that a mile race would be held on the next Saturday, in the afternoon, at three o'clock, at Kensico Lake, between Mr. Don Walcott, the champion of New England, and Mr. Bright, a student of Columbia College.

A cheer went up from the crowd at this, and a buzz of conversation ensued, all talking of the match, and it is safe to say all were promising themselves that they would be there to witness the race.

"I'm glad they made the match," said Geoffrey Marvin. "Walcott will beat Ben Bright on a straightaway course."

"I think so, myself," agreed Lincoln Sanders; "and I certainly hope so!"

"So do I!" declared Don Ross.

"Ben Bright won't be in it on a straightaway course!" declared Henry Dudley.

"You fellows don't want to be too sure of that!" said Bert Rogers. "I wouldn't bet any money on it, if I were you. Walcott may beat Bright, but one thing is sure, he will have to work hard to accomplish it. Ben Bright was not skating his best, down there awhile ago. He had the inside track, of course, and that was quite an advantage; but I believe he could have beaten Walcott anyway, had they been on even terms."

"I don't!" said Marvin. "You are a Ben Bright man, Rogers."

"No, I'm not a Ben Bright man. I am not stuck on him, any more than you are, but I am not blind to the fact that he is a hard man to beat."

"I know he is hard to beat, as well as you do," growled Marvin, "but I am confident that he is up against it this time, and I would be willing to bet a little something on it, too!"

"If you do, you will stand at least an even chance to lose, Marvin. Don't make the mistake of thinking Walcott has a cinch, for he hasn't."

"Oh, I don't think he has a cinch, but I am sure he will win."

After the announcement by the manager of the rink, the skaters who had left the ice to leave a clear road for Ben and Walcott when they were racing, returned to the ice and resumed skating. Ben's friends—Tom, Spalding and the rest, came out upon the ice, also, and the youths skated for an hour or more, and enjoyed themselves hugely. Then, taking off the skates, they returned to their apartments, talking enthusiastically of the race which was to take place between Ben and the New England champion on the coming Saturday.

CHAPTER IV.

BEN AND DOROTHY.

The main topic of conversation among the members of the freshmen and sophomore classes of Columbia, next day, was the coming race between Ben Bright and the New England champion skater, and the majority were in hopes that Ben would win. A few, however, such as Sanders, Marvin and their gang, and Gilbert Throckmorton and

three cronies of his, who were old enemies of Ben, wished that he might be defeated, but they were careful not to talk too freely along these lines.

Little Punn, accompanied by several of the youths, were at St. Nicholas Rink at seven o'clock, that evening, and the thousand dollars was put in the hands of the manager of the rink, Walcott depositing a like amount.

"I'm sorry for you, Walcott!" said Little Punn, coolly, as soon as the money was up. "You are going to lose your money, for Ben Bright will beat you just as sure as Saturday after rolls around!"

"You think so?" with a sneering smile.

"I am sure of it!"

"Indeed? Well, my young friend, you need not worry about me. You had better save your sorrow for your friend, Mr. Bright."

"But he won't need it!"

"That is probably what you think, but you'll change your tune when I get him on the ice, with a straightaway course before us."

"I don't think!"

"See here, Little Punn," said a voice; "if you think Ben Bright will beat Mr. Walcott, I'll bet you a thousand dollars he doesn't do anything of the kind!"

The youths, who were standing in a group, with Walcott facing them, turned, and saw Gilbert Throckmorton standing near.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" remarked Little Punn, coolly.

"Yes," sullenly, "it's me!"

"Ah! just so! And have you the thousand dollars with you?"

"Yes, I have!"

"Very good. Put it up, in the hands of the manager of the rink. I'll cover it. I happened, luckily, to bring an extra thousand with me, this evening, in the expectation of meeting a sucker like you."

Gilbert flushed angrily.

"You'll see who is the sucker, Saturday!" he said, hotly. "Ben Bright is going to get beat so badly he won't want to ever put on a pair of skates again!"

"Bah! You make me tired, Gilbert!" the little chap said. "Put up your money, but don't talk through your headgear any more. We don't wish to listen to it!"

"The gentleman has a right to talk, if he wishes to do so!" said Walcott, who was willing to take Gilbert's part, on account of the fact that the youth was wagering money on him, as against Ben Bright.

"Oh, yes, he has a right to talk," said Little Punn; "so do parrots have, and there is about as much to the talk of one as to the talk of the other!"

Gilbert flushed, but said nothing in reply, save to remark that he was ready to place the money in the hands of the stakeholder, and this was done.

"Is your father still worth a quarter of a million dollars, Gilbert?" asked Little Punn, calmly, when the money had been put up.

"He is!" replied the youth, stiffly.

"Well, he won't after Saturday; I will have a thousand dollars out of it!" with a grin.

"You'll see!" retorted Gilbert, angrily.

"Thawt's wight, donchew know!" said Charley Gilder-sleeve, a dude, and the crony of Gilbert.

"I never 'know;' I consider it vulgar!" grinned Little Punn. "How are you, Gilly, anyway?"

"Ahm all wight, donchew know!" with a frown. "Yaw aw intholent!"

Little Punn laughed, carelessly, and presently he and his companions left the rink, and returned to their apartments.

"Well, did you get the money up?" asked Spalding, who with Tom and Markham had remained at home.

"Yes, I got the thousand up with Walcott," replied Little Punn, "and I got another thousand up with Gilbert Throckmorton."

"Good enough!" said Tom. "I hope you'll win both bets, Punny."

"So do I! And I think I will, too. I am confident Ben can beat that fellow."

"I think he can," agreed Spalding. "He ran away from him, last night, when he spurted, and if I were a betting man, I would wager every dollar I had in the world that Ben would beat him."

While the youths were there in the parlor of Ben's and Tom's suite of rooms, talking, Ben was over at Barnard College, calling on Dorothy Dare, his beautiful chum, she Tom and himself being the "three chums" who were "all for one and one for all." Ben had not intended calling, as he had seen Dorothy only the day before, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hinkle, but Dorothy had sent him word that she wished to see him, so he had gone over there, even though he had intended going downtown to a skating rink to practice a bit, in preparation for his race with Walcott, the coming Saturday.

"You sent for me, Dorothy?" Ben asked, when the greetings were over, and they were seated on the sofa.

"Yes, Ben."

"You wished to see me—why?"

"I wished to know whether or not there was any truth in the story which we girls heard, to-day, that you were to have a skating race with a man, next Saturday?"

Ben smiled and nodded.

"It is true," he said.

"And you are to race with him?"

"Yes."

"At Kensico Lake?"

"At Kensico Lake."

"And this man, Ben—is it true that he is the champion of New England?" There was an anxious tone to Dorothy's voice.

"That is what they say, Dorothy. I don't know whether it is the truth, or not."

"We girls heard that you raced with him, last night, in St. Nicholas Rink, and that you beat him. Is that true?"

Ben nodded.

"Yes, that is true, Dorothy."

The girl's face brightened still more.

"I am glad to hear that!" she said. "But, if you beat him, last night, and he did his best, how comes it that he challenged you to another race?"

"I'll tell you how it was, little chum: You see, we raced in the rink, which is a small place for a race. We had to go 'round and 'round in a small circle, and naturally the one having the inside track, had a big advantage, inasmuch as he did not have to go nearly so far in making a circuit as the one on the outside. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes; and do you mean to say that you——"

"Had the inside track? Yes. For that reason, Mr. Walcott, the champion of New England, feels sure that he can beat me on a straightaway course, and for that reason he challenged me."

The troubled look came back to Dorothy's face, and she looked searchingly at Ben, who returned the look with a smile.

"Ben!" the girl said.

"Well, little chum?"

"I wish to ask a question."

"Very well."

"It is this: Do you think you can defeat that man?"

The smile left Ben's face, and he became serious at once.

"I'll tell you, Dorothy," he said, slowly, "I really think I can defeat him; but it will be a close race, so close, in fact, that I cannot speak with any degree of certainty. I am going to beat him, if I can."

"I am sure of that!" with a smile. "Oh, I do hope you will win, Ben! And that reminds me that Mamie and I and a number of the girls have been talking the matter over, and we wish to go along, and see the race. May we?"

"Don't say 'may we,' Dorothy!" cried a voice, and Mamie Blair, Dorothy's chum, entered the room, smiling; "say

we are going, and say it in a very determined tone of voice! I wouldn't miss seeing that race for anything, and I'm going, whether Ben says I may, or not!"

"How do you do, Mamie?" smiled Ben, rising and accepting the hand which the girl extended. "I was just going to remark to Dorothy that I did not quite see how I could keep you girls from going, if you wished to do so. But, I would not wish to keep you from going. Nothing in the world would please me more than to have you there, to cheer me, and urge me on to the extra exertions which might mean victory for me."

"Good! I'm so glad you want us to go, Ben!" said Dorothy.

"How many of the girls are figuring on going?" asked Ben.

"Oh, about twenty, I think. There will be quite a crowd of us, anyway."

"The more, the better!" smiled Ben. "There cannot be too many girls go."

"There! That sounds just like Ben, doesn't it?" laughed Mamie.

"I mean it!" he said.

"Oh, I don't doubt that," with another jolly laugh; "still I would be willing to wager that you would sacrifice numbers to quality. In other words, if one girl was there, you would be willing to dispense with the presence of all the rest, rather than to have the crowd present, and the one girl absent!"

Ben blushed, and Dorothy changed color, also, and she cuffed Mamie's ears in mock anger.

"Mamie, you are the worst tease!" she exclaimed. "I

"Nit—as our esteemed friend Little Punn would say!" have a good mind to cut you off my list of friends!" laughed Mamie.

"We are going to take the one o'clock train, girls," said Ben; "so you girls must be at the station on time."

"We'll be there!" Mamie declared.

"I shall have too much to attend to, to come up here and accompany you, myself," Ben went on; "but I'll send Little Punn up. How will that do?"

"That will do nicely, Ben," said Dorothy. "So far as that is concerned, we do not need any one, as there will be so many of us together."

"Well, I'll send him up, anyway. He will come in handy in assisting you to secure tickets."

"Oh, very well; we shall be glad to have him along."

After some more talk, mostly regarding the coming skating match, Ben bade the girls good night, and returned to his apartments, where he found the youths discussing the same subject.

"Hello, Ben!" cried Little Punn; "I've got another bet up on you—with your good friend, Gilbert Throckmorton."

"Is that so?" the youth asked. "Well, I don't approve of betting, as you well know, Punny, but I shall do my best to see to it that Gilbert Throckmorton doesn't get away with your money!"

"Good for you, Ben! I feel confident that you can beat that fellow Walcott."

"He's a good skater, Punny."

"I know that; but you're a better one."

"I am not sure of it, my boy. I had such a big advantage, in the race, last night, that I can't be sure of my ability to defeat him."

"We are sure of it!" drawled Spalding.

"We are, for a fact!" from Tom. "We were watching the race, closely, last night, and we saw you run away from Walcott at the finish, and I know he was doing his best. You can beat him, Ben!"

"Of course he can!" from Blues Brown.

"Sure!" from Ralph Peters.

"Well," said Little Punn, with a judicial air, "it is going to be a close thing, so close, in fact, that I almost wish I had challenged him, and skated against him, in Ben's place! It might be a good plan for you to strain an ankle, or something of that kind, and put me in to skate, even yet, Ben!"

A hollow groan went up from Brown, and the other youths had to smile.

"Wouldn't that lacerate the feelings of the most phlegmatic, though!" growled Brown. "Wouldn't it bump you?"

"Say, did you hear Brownie use that term, 'the most phlegmatic?'" grinned Little Punn. "I thought it was going to get him down, for a moment, but he braced up, took a fresh hold, and got it out! Where did you drop onto it, anyway, old man, and what does it mean?"

"Bah! You know what it means, all right!"

"Do I?"

"Yes."

"Of course I do, but you don't!"

"I don't?"

"No."

"Well, I guess that I do!"

"What does it mean, then?"

"I could tell, if I wanted to, but I don't believe, after all, that you know."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Well, I do know, just the same."

"Then tell us what 'the most phlegmatic' means."

"It means 'Dutchmen'."

"What!" Brown almost shouted the word, while the other youths laughed aloud.

"You say it means 'Dutchmen,' Punny?" he went on.

"That's what it means."

Brown snorted, and then his lips curled with scorn.

"You are crazy!" he said. "I would like to know where you get it! How do you make out that 'the most phlegmatic' means 'Dutchmen?'"

"That's easy."

"It is, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, for goodness' sake, explain it, then! How do you make it out?"

"It is, as I said, very easy: Dutchmen are the most phlegmatic people in the world; therefore 'the most phlegmatic' means 'Dutchmen'—see?"

Brown nearly fainted, and the other youths fanned themselves, and groaned dismally, in unison.

CHAPTER V.

SOME FANCY SKATING.

A large crowd was at the Grand Central Station, Saturday, at one o'clock.

Don Walcott, the champion skater of New England, and a few friends and followers of his, were there, and Ben Bright, and his friends, to the number of about two hundred, were there.

Among the two hundred were both freshmen and sophomores, a few juniors and seniors and about twenty-five girls from Barnard College.

"Is that man, yonder, Walcott?" asked Dorothy of Ben, who was standing, talking to her and Mamie.

She indicated the man in question by a nod of her head, and Ben replied:

"That is Walcott. What do you think of him?"

"I don't know, Ben. He is considerably older than you."

"Yes, he must be twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. I rather think that will be something in my favor."

"I hope so, Ben."

"He looks as if he might be a good skater," said Mamie.

"He looks confident," remarked another of the girls.

"I have no doubt but what he thinks he will win," said Ben. "It is but natural that he should think so. He is the champion of New England, and he would hardly expect to find a youth here in New York who could beat him."

"But I hope he has found such a one in you, Ben!" said Dorothy.

Ben smiled.

"I hope so!" he said.

Just then Rob Lodge, a sophomore, walked up and extended his hand toward Ben.

"I hope you will win, Ben!" he said. "It is Columbia College against the whole of New England, and I wish, naturally, that Columbia might come out ahead."

"I shall do my best, Rob," said Ben. "I thank you for your good wishes."

"Of course, I would rather it was a soph who was doing this," Lodge added, with a smile, "but as it isn't, I am with you anyway."

Ben smiled.

"I will be a soph next year," he said. "You can console yourself with that thought."

"True," was the smiling reply.

"See Lodge over there, shaking hands with Bright, and wishing him success!" remarked Geoffrey Marvin, in disgust. "And he is a sophomore, too! It is disgusting!"

"So it is!" agreed Henry Dudley. "I don't see why any sophomore should want Ben Bright to win."

"Nor do I," coincided Don Ross.

"It'll give Ben Bright the swelled head worse than ever, and make the freshmen more arrogant and overbearing than they already are, if such a thing is possible," said Sanders. "Things are at a pretty pass at Columbia, as it is. I never expected to see the freshmen cocks of the walk in a college, as they are there."

"Yes, he must be twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. sophs pretty level, and Sandow was too much for them in several individual competitions, but we were not the whole thing, as is this year's freshman class."

"It is all account of the gall of that fellow Bright!" growled Marvin. "But for him, the sophomore class would be occupying the position it ought to occupy, and the freshies would not be so fresh."

"There is one consolation," said Sanders; "some of the freshness may be taken out of them by the time we get back to New York, this evening."

"You mean, that Walcott will beat Ben Bright, skating?"

"Yes."

"Well, I hope he will do so! I'd give a pretty penny to see that fellow beaten!"

The doors were now opened for the one o'clock train, and the people began pouring through the doorways. There were so many students going that it was found necessary to hitch on four extra coaches, and these were filled to the limit.

Soon the train started, and rolled into the dark mouth of the tunnel soon after leaving the station, and it was several minutes before the train emerged from the tunnel, which is quite a long one.

Harlem was reached, and the train stopped there, after which it rolled onward, crossing the Harlem River, and making another stop at Mott Haven. No other stop was made until Mt. Vernon was reached, and as the train drew up at the station, Mamie made as if to leave the coach.

"Where are you going, Mamie?" Dorothy cried, in surprise.

"I thought I had better get off," smiled Mamie. "Here is where my home is, you know."

Dorothy and the other girls laughed.

"Oh!" Dorothy said, "I see. But you are not going home, just now."

"That's so; I guess I won't get off!" and the girl took her seat again.

"You couldn't drag Mamie off this train with a lariat!" grinned Little Punn. "She wouldn't miss seeing that race for a farm."

"Not for two farms, Little Punn!" the jolly girl said. "You are right."

"Oh, I'm always right!"

"In your own mind!" sneered Brown.

"Now, see here, Brownie," said Little Punn, in a tone of great severity; "you know I permitted you to come along to-day, only on your making a promise to keep still and say nothing! If you go to talking, I shall make you get off at the first station at which we stop, and take the next train back to New York!"

"You'll make me get off the train and go back! Well, you have got the nerve, Punny! It is fairly monumental."

"That's all right. Just you keep quiet, or you will see!"

"Bah!"

"Bleating like a sheep won't help you, Brownie! Better keep still."

The train was moving away from the Mt. Vernon station, now, and sped northward at a lively rate. Bronxville, Tuckahoe, Scarsdale, Hartsdale and White Plains were passed through, and then the train stopped at Ken-sico, and the two hundred and fifty people who had come there to see the race alighted. To their surprise they found three or four hundred people there, waiting to see them get off. The people of the village and surrounding country had heard that the race was to take place, and had come to see it.

"Just see the people who heard that I was coming on this train and came down to meet me!" said Little Punn, and

he lifted his hat in quite a grandiloquent way, and began bowing in every direction.

Just as Little Punn was bending forward, in a profound bow, Spalding gave him a push, sending him to the ground on his nose, much to the gratification of Brown, and the delight of the crowd of spectators.

"Who was the base villain who pushed me—me! down?" cried the little chap, struggling to his feet, and looking around. "Show me to him, and I will——"

"I pushed you—you! down," grinned Spalding; "now what are you going to do about it?"

"You did it, you say, Spaldy?"

"I did it."

"Oh, well, then, that's all right!" cheerfully. "I thought Brownie did it, and I was going to pulverize him!"

"Yes, you'd pulverize me, over the left!" said Brown.

"You couldn't pulverize a lump of sugar."

"That may be what you think!"

It was about a quarter of a mile from the station to the lake, and soon the crowd was there.

"What a pretty little lake!" said Dorothy.

"It is a pretty lake, sure enough!" from Mamie.

"And the ice is smooth as glass!" said Little Punn.

"Jove! it couldn't be better for the race! Watch me, now!" and the little chap took a running start, and went scooting out on the ice at a lively rate. Suddenly his feet flew from under him, and down he came on his back and the back of his head with a thump, and he went scooting onward quite a distance after the mishap.

The spectators roared, and as the little chap scrambled cautiously to his feet and came walking back to the shore, they geyed him unmercifully.

"How is the ice, Punny?"

"Is it slick as glass?"

"How does the back of your head feel?"

"You are a dandy skater, you are!"

"Which is the harder, your head or the ice?"

"Do it again, Punny!"

"Who said that?" inquired the little chap. "I can stand what the rest of you said, all right, but I draw the line at being requested to 'do it again!' What do you think I'm here for, anyway—to furnish free amusement for the crowd? If you do, you are badly left! If the fellow who wanted me to 'do it again' wants it done again, he can do it himself, and see how he likes it!"

"That's right, Punny; don't let them impose on you!" said Markham.

"I don't intend to!" Then Little Punn drew some silver from his pocket. There was a half handful: probably five or six dollars, in halves, quarters, dimes and nickels. The

little chap looked at the silver for a few moment, and then said:

"A fellow is foolish to carry so much weight around with him. I guess I'll get rid of this stuff. I'm not a silver man, anyhow!" and with the words, he gave the silver a toss, throwing it in such a way that it went scooting along the surface of the ice to quite a distance out.

"Whoever gets the money may have it!" he cried, and the words were scarcely out his mouth before a gang of about twenty boys and youths—residents of Kensico and surrounding country—went flying out on the ice in pursuit of the silver pieces. The youths fell, rolled, slid out on the ice, and those who fell were careful to trip others and cause them to fall, and soon they were a struggling, kicking fighting mass, and the spectators shrieked and yelled with delight. It was a laughable spectacle, and the crowd laughed till the tears came, and yelled encouragement to the boys and youths. The skating match was forgotten for the time being, and it was not until the gang out on the ice had succeeded in securing the silver pieces and returned to the shore that the thoughts of the spectators returned to the race.

"Say, that was more fun than a barrel of monkeys!" said Little Punn, in delight. "I wish I had brought a sackful of silver, along!"

"There would have been no opportunity for pulling off the race, then!" said Ralph Peters.

"That's so; well, I think I shall bring a sackful of silver, and come up here one of these days, and just stay here all day, and have fun with the boys!"

"I guess they wouldn't kick on your doing so!"

A committee consisting of Tom True, Will Rhyme and Rob Lodge proceeded to measure off the course. A tape-measure had been brought along, and it would not take more than half an hour to do the work.

During the wait, however, Walcott did some fancy skating, powdered ice being sprinkled on the ice, to make a white covering, and in this the marks of the skates showed plainly.

Walcott was a good hand at this kind of work, and he was applauded loudly when he finished. The committee which had gone to measure off the course had not yet returned, however, and Ben told Pinky Sweet to go and sprinkle some powdered ice on the ice. The little fellow did so, and then Ben skated out, and began duplicating the feats of Walcott with an easy grace that met with instant applause from the spectators, while it caused a dark and angry look to appear on the face of Walcott and his friends who had not thought of such a thing as that Ben Bright was a fancy skater, as well as a speedy one.

"I believe that fellow can do anything!" growled Sanders. "I never saw the like in all my life!"

"And he always wants to show off, too!" sneered Marvin. "He never loses an opportunity."

Marvin did not seem to think that Walcott was as open to this charge as Ben, but this is always the case, that people who find fault with some for doing a thing, seem to think it all right, and the proper thing in others.

"He's an all right fancy skater!" said Bert Rogers. "I believe he is better at it than Walcott."

"I don't see it!" growled Marvin.

"Your prejudice blinds you, my boy!"

This was true, but Marvin did not wish to acknowledge it, and he growled in a savage manner.

Ben went through all the feats that had been performed by Walcott, and then, Pinky having re-powdered the surface of the ice, Ben skated around to the end of the powdered strip, and giving a couple of powerful strokes, lifted one foot, and skating on the other, began a series of bewildering twists and turns, and when he had finished, it was seen that he had written the following name:

"Dorothy Dare!"

Instantly a cheer went up from all the students of Columbia College, and from the girls of Barnard, and Dorothy blushed to the roots of her hair, and looked confused.

"Three cheers for Ben Bright and Dorothy Dare!" cried Little Punn, and the cheers were given with a will.

"Oh, Ben! how did you do that!" cried Dorothy, as he skated over to where she stood at the edge of the ice. "I would never believe anyone could write a person's name in that fashion!"

"Nor would I!" from Mamie.

"Oh, it is easy enough when you know how!" said Little Punn. "There is a lake just back of the school-house where I used to go to school, and I used to put on skates and go out on that lake and work examples on the ice, and do my spelling and writing lessons! Oh, I——"

"Make everybody tired!" broke in Spalding. "You can't stand up on a pair of skates, much less write anything. Shut up!"

"All right, if you say so, Spaldy; but I was telling the truth, just the same."

"Then why is it that you can't skate now?"

"I've forgotten how, that's why."

"Oh! that's it."

"As little Punn has just said, it is very easy when you know how," smiled Ben, in answer to Dorothy's question.

"It is really not so difficult as it looks."

"No, I always found it very eas——" began Little Punn, but a threatening look from Spalding shut him up.

"Wouldn't that jar you, the way they yell whenever Ben Bright does anything!" said Marvin, who had taken up a position near Walcott.

"That's all right!" growled the New Englander; "let 'em yell. I'll jar the whole gang when I get that fellow on the ice with me in the race! I'm going to beat him so bad he won't ever want to put a pair of skates on again!"

"Good for you!" said Marvin. "I hope you will!"

"Well, I can do it, all right, you can bet on that!"

"He just got out there and did those fancy stunts on purpose to make people howl for him!"

"Of course! But they'll howl out of the other corner of their mouths when the race is over!"

Walcott seemed to have perfect confidence that he could defeat the youth, but it remained to be seen whether or not he was justified in his feelings of confidence.

The committee returned at this moment, and instantly all was bustle and confusion. The race would start in a short time!

CHAPTER VI.

THE RACE.

The finish line was marked, and then Ben and Walcott, accompanied by the starter, set off down the lake, as they would start at the farther end of the course, and finish where the crowd was gathered:

They were watched with eager interest by hundreds of pairs of eyes, and the nearer they got to the starting-point, the greater became the excitement.

"Now, then," said Little Punn, drawing a roll of bank-notes from his pocket, and prancing over to the little crowd which he knew to be in sympathy with Walcott, "if there are any among you who are willing to wager that Mr. Walcott of New England will come over the finish line a winner, let him speak up! I have here a handful of Uncle Sam's promises to pay bearer on demand certain sums, if you think your man will win, why put up your money!"

"Oh, get away from here!" growled Marvin; "we do not care to bet. We would certainly win, if we were to do so, however."

"I don't think!" grinned Little Punn.

The little chap strutted back to where the main body of spectators were, and turned his attention to watching the three who were now away down toward the starting-point, close to the end of the lake.

"Those guys over there have no sporting blood in them!"

he said. "They claim to have a sure thing, yet will not put up a dollar to back their judgment."

"Perhaps they are not so sure of it as they let on," said Pinky Sweet.

"I guess that is about the size of it!" with a grin. "Well, they show good judgment in keeping their dough in their pockets! They'd lose it, if they didn't, for Ben is going to beat that fellow, and don't you forget it!"

"I hope so!"

"Oh, I do hope Ben will win!" breathed Dorothy. "I should feel badly disappointed, if he should lose!"

"He won't lose!" said Mamie Blair, with confidence. "I tell you, Ben is a wonder, and is practically invincible in whatever he turns his attention to."

All eyes were on the three at the farther end of the lake, and when they were seen to stop, and after a little wait, two of them were seen to station themselves a short distance apart, in a stooping position, with the third individual a little distance off to one side, the hearts of all beat quicker, and they strained their eyes and hearing—for the signal to start was to be a pistol shot.

There was a short wait, then, bang! went the pistol, the report coming to the spectators several seconds after the two were seen to start.

The race was on and the excitement was intense. A number of youths who had skates on, skated up the lake, along the shore, so as to get a partial side-view of the racers as they came, it being impossible to tell which was ahead when they were coming straight toward the crowd.

The fact was, that for the first quarter of the distance the skaters kept even with each other, Ben not trying to pull away from his opponent; and the youth could not make up his mind as to whether or not Walcott was doing his best.

"We are going at a pretty good clip," the youth thought; "but I think he can go faster. He will probably cut loose, and work himself to the full limit at the half-way mark. I'll just hold in, and let him set the pace."

On went the skaters, like a pair of swallows on the wing, abreast, neither having gained any advantage, and both seeming to be as strong as at the start.

"Now he'll loosen up!" thought Ben, and as the thought flashed through his mind, Walcott began putting on more steam, and rapidly increased his speed, until he was going at Express train speed.

"Jove! he can go some, sure!" Ben thought, but he let out an extra link or two, and held the New Englander for a hundred yards or so, and then Ben made up his mind to work a little ruse on his opponent. He knew that Walcott

felt confident of being able to defeat him, and he reasoned that if he fell back, slightly, now, the fellow would think he had the race won, and would allow his nerves and muscles to relax slightly. Then, when about two hundred yards from the finish line, the youth could go out and cross the finish in front.

"I'll work it that way, anyhow," thought Ben, and he gradually fell back, until he was about five feet behind Walcott, who seeing that he was in the lead, became certain that he had the race won, and a feeling of exultation took possession of him.

"Why, this is a cinch!" he thought. "The young fellow held on better than I expected, but he would have to be a whole lot better skater than he is, to beat me! Won't I get even with that gang down there, that whooped and howled for Ben Bright, though!"

Ah! the chickens that have been counted before they were hatched! Walcott was to find that he had no cinch, at any rate.

Meanwhile all was the greatest excitement at the finish line. The spectators were watching the oncoming racers with staring eyes, and in many cases there were palpitating hearts.

"Oh, Tom!" gasped Dorothy; "it—it looks as though that—that man was in the lead, does it not!" The girl was trembling with excitement, and so was her voice.

Tom's face was dark and stern.

"It is hard to say, just yet, Dorothy," he replied, "but it does look, from where we stand, as though Walcott was in the lead."

"He is, but it's just a trick of Ben's!" cried Little Punn, confidently. Ben is all right, and up to snuff—don't forget it! Don't you be afraid, Tom and Dorothy! That chum of yours is all right. He'll come under the wire winner, and I'd bet another thousand on it this minute!"

"Oh, Little Punn! do you really think so?" breathed Dorothy, her face clearing slightly, and a hopeful light appearing in the beautiful eyes, so recently filled with a look of foreboding.

"I am sure of it, Dorothy!" Little Punn declared. "That fellow can't beat Ben!"

"Tom's face cleared, somewhat, also. He knew that Ben was heady, as well as a speedy skater, and he felt that it was not only possible, but quite probable that Ben was "working" his opponent.

"I rather think Punny is right!" he said. "I feel confident that Ben will win."

Walcott's friends, however, were sure their man was going to win. He was ahead, and they were sure he was ahead because his opponent could not help himself.

"Walcott will win!" cried Geoffrey Marvin. "He will win in a walk!"

"I'll bet you a thousand dollars he doesn't!" retorted Little Punn, quickly. "What do you say? Yes, or no?"

"Yes!" cried Marvin, who, confident, now, that Walcott would win, was not averse to winning a thousand dollars from Little Punn, whom he hated almost as much as he did Ben Bright.

"All right; a thousand goes!" cried Little Punn.

Then he turned his attention to the racers.

On came the two contestants, and, as the closer they came the plainer it was seen that Walcott was in the lead, the hearts of the majority of Ben's adherents and friends sank.

"Ben is going to be beaten!" they thought.

Ben was determined not to be beaten, however, and was simply biding his time, waiting until the point should be reached when it would be time for him to extend himself, and skate for all there was in him.

"I don't believe he can fetch a sprint, after the way he has been working to secure and hold the lead," thought Ben. "I think I will be able to show him my heels, all right."

There was nothing braggadocio about this; it was Ben's calm judgment, based on observation, as they swept down the lake.

"Oh, I wish Ben would catch up with him!" breathed Dorothy. "Do you think he can win, Tom?"

"Of course he'll win, Dorothy!" said Little Punn, whose confidence was as strong as ever. "Just you wait a moment, and you'll see something! You'll see Ben fetch a sprint that will make your hair curl!"

"Goodness! I would be willing to have it curled as close to my head as the hair of a ducky, if Ben could only win!" the girl said.

"Watch, now!" said Little Punn; "Ben'll sprint in a moment. He can go faster than they are going, and I know it! Watch!"

At this instant Ben began his sprint! He suddenly shot forward at such greatly increased speed that all could see it, and he was alongside of Walcott so quickly it could hardly be seen how it was done, and a great cheer went up from the spectators. Ben's wonderful sprint opened their eyes, and electrified them, and as the youth began to gradually pull away from his opponent, and leave him struggling in the rear, the spectators became wild with delight, and cheered and cheered!

"Ben will win! Ben will win!" cried Dorothy, and she waved the Columbia colors, blue and white, in the air, while her face flushed and her beautiful eyes shone with delight.

"Didn't I tell you so!" cried Little Punn, almost beside himself with delight. "It's Ben's race!"

As for Walcott's friends and adherents, they paled as they saw Ben leap into his wonderful sprint, and as he passed his opponent, and began drawing away from him, they yelled to Walcott to:

"Catch up with him!"

"Don't let him pull away from you!"

"Skate for your life!"

"Don't let him beat you!"

"Sprint, man; sprint!"

Walcott heard, but could not respond. He had exerted himself too greatly in securing the lead at the half-way mark, and retaining it to where Ben had caught him, and he could not have shown a sprint to save his life. The result was that Ben Bright won the race, as he gradually increased his lead, and crossed the finish line ten yards ahead of his opponent, amid the wildest kind of shouting, and waving of handkerchiefs by the spectators—that is, the majority of them. Of course, Walcott's friends and adherents did not cheer.

"Ben Bright wins! Three cheers for Ben Bright!" cried Little Punn, and the cheers were given with a will.

Ben circled around and glided back to where Dorothy and the other girls stood, and, stopping, received their congratulations.

"You won, Ben!" breathed Dorothy. "Oh, I am so glad! But you must surely be tired!"

Ben laughed.

"Not so very tired," he said. "I have been more tired, many a time."

"Pshaw! You don't think it would make him tired to defeat that fellow skating, do you?" said Little Punn, airily. "Not on your tintype!"

Then Little Punn made his way across to where Marvin and his crowd stood.

"Marvin, old socks, I will trouble you for that little old thousand you owe me," he said.

Marvin gave the little chap a cold stare.

"I don't know what you mean," he said.

The smile disappeared from Little Punn's face, and an angry look took its place.

"You don't know what I mean?" he asked.

"No."

Little Punn stared Marvin straight in the eyes, and the youth had to drop his gaze.

"I guess you know, all right," the little chap said. "You owe me a thousand dollars."

"For what?" Marvin tried to keep his tones even, but

his voice trembled slightly, showing that he was laboring under considerable nervous strain.

"You know well enough why, Marvin. You bet me a thousand dollars that Walcott would defeat Ben Bright, a few minutes ago, and he failed to do so. Now I want my money."

"Oh, that's what you mean!" he said. "Why, Punny, you know that was all in jest. I didn't mean to bet, really."

Little Punni looked the other straight in the eyes, and his lips curled in contempt and unbelief.

"And do you mean that if Walcott had won, you would not have expected me to pay you the thousand dollars?" he asked.

"Why, of course I should not have expected anything of the kind. No money was up, and I was only in fun. I don't owe you a cent."

Little Punni's eyes flashed.

"Marvin," he said, coldly, "do you know what I think? No? Then I'll tell you: I think you are the biggest liar in seven States! And I am positive that, had Walcott won, you would have been after me, hot, for that thousand dollars. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"I've a good mind to knock your block off!" threatened Marvin, but Little Punni, who was game as a pebble when his blood was up, never flinched, but looking the other straight in the eyes, said, grimly:

"Just try it!"

But Marvin did not try it; and with a smile of scorn on his face, and a snap of his fingers in Marvin's face, the little chap turned away.

CHAPTER VII.

LITTLE PUNNI COLLECTS.

"What do you think Marvin did, just now?" he asked, when he had returned to his friends.

"I don't know, what?" asked Markham.

"He refused to pay me the thousand dollars I won from him."

"The thousand you bet just before the race ended, when Walcott was in the lead?"

"Yes."

"Why, it was a fair and square bet!"

"Of course it was! I have all the people here for witnesses, and, although the money was not actually up, it was just the same, and if Walcott had won, I should have paid

over the one thousand dollars, just the same as though it had actually been up."

"Of course; and Marvin refuses to pay?"

"Yes; he says he was just in fun, and didn't mean to bet, at all."

"Just the same, if his man had won, he would have been after you for the money, I'll bet on that!" said Ralph Peters.

"That's what I told him, too!" said Little Punni. "I think he is small potatoes and a few in a hill!"

"And a poor kind of potatoes at that!" from Pinky Sweet.

"That's right; you have him down pretty fine, Punny," from Rhyme.

"You'll never see that thousand dollars," said Spalding.

"No; he said he wouldn't pay it."

"It's too bad!" remarked Markham, sympathetically. "Marvin is a regular skin."

"He's all that! Well, I won a thousand from one fellow, who will be unable to kick out, because the money is up, and that is Gilbert Throekmorton."

"You won a thousand from Walcott, too."

"Yes, but that doesn't give me so much satisfaction as the thousand I won from Gilbert, or the thousand from Marvin, if I had got it, for I dislike those two fellows exceedingly, and would like to win everything they have. Walcott I have nothing particular against."

"It isn't the money you are after, so much as it is to get even with them, eh, Punny?" smiled Dickson.

"That's about the size of it."

Ben Bright had removed his skates by this time, and leaving the admiring crowd, he walked over to where Walcott, dark-faced and disappointed-looking, stood, almost alone—Marvin, Sanders and the rest having deserted him, now that he had lost. The youth held out his hand.

"I wish to congratulate you on the splendid race you put up, Mr. Walcott," Ben said. "You made me hustle to beat you."

Walcott hesitated. He was very sore over having been beaten by an amateur, but his good sense told him it would be best to take his defeat gracefully, so he took Ben's hand.

"Thank you," he said. "I am pretty badly cut up over this affair, for I thought I could beat you easily. You are a wonder, Mr. Bright. There are few who can beat you. I am free to say that you are the best skater I ever saw, much less ran up against."

"I have skated but little, this winter," said Ben, "and none at all last winter, and I was afraid I would be unable to do myself justice. One does not forget the knack

ence it is thoroughly acquired, however, and a little practice will put a fellow back in shape again."

"Well, if you were not in your true form to-day, I would not care to skate against you when you were!"

Ben smiled.

"I guess I never skated much better than I skated to-day," he said.

Then he returned to his friends, and was congratulated on every hand.

It lacked only a few minutes of train time, and there was a hurried movement toward the railway station, the crowd reaching it a couple of minutes before the train came in.

The extra coaches had been left behind, on a side-track, by the train they came up on, and the down train hooked onto them, and the crowd filled them up completely.

Jollity reigned supreme on the way back to the city. The majority of those in the coaches had favored Ben, and they were glad he had won, and they let the fact be known.

Dorothy, Mamie and the rest of the girls were delighted with the result of the race, and they talked and laughed in a manner to which they had been strangers during the up trip.

Ben and his chums, and the Barnard College girls, as well as nearly half the students, got off the train at Harlem, and took street cars across to the Boulevard, and then took cars down past Barnard and Columbia Colleges from there. The girls alighted at Barnard, and were given three cheers as the cars sped onward.

Ben and his friends got off at the street on which their apartment house was located, and then walked across Amsterdam avenue, and were at home once more.

"Well, hurrah for Ben Bright and the freshman class of Columbia College!" cried Little Punn. "Ben, you are all right!"

"He certainly is!" from Tom.

"Sure!"

"You know he is!"

"Ben, you're the best skater in the United States!"

Ben laughed, and flushed slightly at the praise.

"Oh, I think you boys over-estimate my abilities," he said. "I beat Walcott, true, but there are lots of skaters who could do the same thing."

"I don't know about that, Ben," objected Little Punn. "He is the champion of New England, and that means a great deal."

"That's right," agreed Tom. "There is not such a very large number of fellows who could beat Walcott, and I think there are very few, indeed, who could beat Ben!"

"That's the way I size it up!" said Markham.

"I'd back you against any of them!" declared Little Punn.

"I believe you would bet on me, if you knew I was going to lose!" smiled Ben.

"But I could never know that, Ben. You generally win, you know."

"Walcott was pretty sore over his defeat, wasn't he, Ben?" asked Tom.

"Yes; he acknowledged as much. It was natural that he should. Being the champion of New England, he hated to be beaten by a young fellow whom he had never heard of before."

"He'll be more careful in future, I judge," smiled Sparks. "This will teach him a lesson."

The youths talked for a while, and then, as it was near six o'clock, they got ready for dinner, and promptly at the hour they went down to the dining-room, for all were hungry.

They went back up to the parlor of Ben's and Tom's suite as soon as the meal was ended, and talked there for half or three-quarters of an hour. Then Little Punn yawned, and said:

"I guess I had better go to the Saint Nicholas Rink and get my money. The manager of the rink held stakes you know."

"Yes, we'll go along, Punny, and see that you don't get robbed coming home," said Markham.

"That's a good idea," said Ben. "There might be some hard cases at the rink, who, seeing Punny receive such a large sum, would think it worth while trying to get it. The rest of you may as well go along with Punny, but I think I will stay here. I am afraid Walcott would think I had come down there on purpose to show myself, and get a chance to make him feel cheap."

"Oh, I don't think he would look at it that way, Ben," said Tom; "but, of course, if you don't feel like going, stay here. There are enough of us to act as a body guard for Punny, without you."

"Oh, yes; I guess I will stay here and read."

So the rest of the youths took their departure, and made their way to the rink, where they found Walcott busily engaged in teaching some beginners how to skate. This was what he was employed for by the manager of the rink, but this evening he did not seem to have much heart in his work. His defeat of the afternoon was in his mind to the exclusion of other things.

He frowned when he saw Tom, Little Punn and the rest.

but his face lighted up a bit when he saw that Ben Bright was not with them.

"I supposed that young fellow would be on hand to make me feel cheap, this evening!" he thought; "but he didn't come. He is a pretty white sort of a chap, after all."

The manager of the rink was not present, and would not be until later in the evening, so Tom, Little Punn and the rest got skates, and came out onto the ice and began skating. It so happened that Gilbert Throckmorton and his three cronies, Clarence Clinger and the two dudes, Charley Gildersleeve and Julian Bloomer, were on the ice and Little Punn's eyes shone with a mischievous light as he saw his enemies.

"I'll just see if I can't have a little fun with them!" he thought. "I still owe them something, and I always pay my debts."

Little Punn was only a fairly good skater, but on this evening he pretended to be a poorer skater than he really was. He watched his opportunity, and waiting until he saw Gilbert and his three cronies coming along the side of the rink at a lively rate—they thought they were fine skaters, and were showing off—he managed to lose control of himself just before Gilbert, who was in the lead, reached him, and, with a wild stroke or two, as though trying to retain his equilibrium, Little Punn fell, and seemingly by accident, but really by design, he stuck out his foot and tripped Gilbert, who fell, and went scooting along the ice on his face, while his three cronies, unable to stop quickly enough, or to avoid him, ran into their fallen companion, and down went the three, ker-thump, right on top of Gilbert, who gave utterance to a wild yell of pain and affright, for he thought he was going to be killed.

It was a great fall and a great tangle, and the four gilded youths scooted along the ice for a distance of twenty yards at least, before they came to a stop, and then they began untangling themselves, with many a remark that was more energetic and vindictive than elegant, while the other skaters gathered about, and jeered the quartette.

"I thought you fellows were skaters!"

"So they are—on their ears!"

"All down but nine—set 'em up again!"

"What's the matter with you fellows, anyway—full?"

"Their heads are so loaded down with brains that they are too heavy, as compared to their feet," explained Little Punn. "and consequently they became overbalanced and fell—see?"

The crowd roared at this.

"I guess that's it—nit!" laughed one.

"Yes, that's it—I hardly think!" from another.

"The brains that are in the heads of those fellows would never overbalance them!"

"Not on your tintype!"

"Their cocoanuts are filled with sawdust, and sawdust isn't heavy."

"What are you fellows trying to do—getting in shape to play football on skates?"

The four youths finally disentangled themselves and scrambled to their feet. They were very angry, and Gilbert glared at Little Punn fiercely, and said:

"You did that on purpose, you——"

"Hold on!" said Little Punn, raising his hand warningly; "don't say anything you'll be sorry for, I beg of you!"

"Well, you did that on purpose!" Gilbert reasserted, "and I think it was a shabby trick, to say the least!"

"Of course he did it on purpose!" growled Clarence Clinger.

"Awve course he did, donchew know!" from Gildersleeve.

"Thawt's wight, baw jawve!" from Bloomer.

"Gentlemen, you wrong me!" said Little Punn, with great apparent earnestness. "I assure you nothing was farther from my thoughts than the tripping up of your worthy selves."

"Aw don't believe it, donchew know!" muttered Gildersleeve. "Yaw did it on purpose."

"I have just remarked, Gilly, that it was accidental," said Little Punn, calmly. "You see, I do not happen to be such a skilled skater as you fellows are, and it so happened that I lost my balance and fell, just as you were coming along, Gilbert tripped over my foot and down he went, the rest of you falling over him. I am very, very sorry—that you didn't break your necks—but of course I could not help what occurred, and am not to blame."

"Ya-as." growled Bloomer; "yaw sorry we didn't break our necks, there is no doubt about that! Ahnd Aw am confident yaw did thawt twick on purpose!"

"Well, then, let's see yaw prove it!" mimicked Little Punn, not in the least ruffled.

"Awve course Aw eawn't prove it," Bloomer acknowledged; "but Aw believe it, just the same, baw jawve!"

"All right, believe it, if it will do you any good," grinned Little Punn. "I don't care what you believe."

"You need a good thrashing, that's what you need!" fumed Gilbert.

"Well, why don't you sail in and give it to me, then?" asked the little chap, coolly, seemingly not in the least alarmed—as indeed he was not, for he knew his friends would stand by him, and see to it that not more than one

attacked him at once, and he was not afraid of any one of the four.

"Fighting is vulgar!" said Gilbert.

"So it is! So it is!" agreed Little Punn. "I'm glad you thought of that in time!"

"Come, fellows, we are losing too much time, here," and Gilbert moved away, his three cronies following him. They remained in the rink, and kept on skating, but they kept a wary eye on Little Punn, much to his amusement. He was well satisfied, for he felt that he had in a measure squared up accounts with them.

About half an hour later the manager of the rink put in an appearance, and he paid over to Little Punn the four thousand dollars that he was holding—two of Little Punn's, and two that had been put up by Waleott and Gilbert Throekmorton.

It ground Gilbert terribly to see his thousand dollars go into Little Punn's pocket, but he had been foolish enough to bet, and he had to take the consequences.

Tom, Little Punn and the rest did not linger long in the rink after that, but left, and started on the return to their apartments.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHALLENGE.

"Well, fellows, it has come at last!"

"What has come, Ben?"

Ben Bright had just entered the room in his and Tom's apartments where the rest of the youths were gathered. In his hand he held a letter, and he held it up so the rest could see it, as he spoke.

"The challenge," he replied, in answer to Tom's question of "What has come, Ben?"

"The challenge?—what challenge, old man?"

"From the manager of the Harvard basket ball team."

"Oh!" the exclamation came in a chorus from the youths.

"So, that's it?" from Tom. "And they want a return game with us, do they?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can just bet that they have got their team up into warm form, if they have sent a challenge, Ben!" said Markham.

"Sure!" agreed Spalding. "They would never have sent the challenge, otherwise."

"Right you are, Spaldy, old socks!" coincided Little

Punn; "and we will have to play the game of our life to beat them, you can bet on that!"

"Hear that 'we'! sneered Brown. "It is always in evidence."

"That's all right, Brownie. I always lend my moral support to our teams, and, therefore, I contend that I have a right to say 'we' whenever I choose to do so."

"Oh, you are always contending some fool thing or other!"

"It is so foolish to contend with you, however, Brownie, that I shall not do so, but will request you to keep still until we hear more about this game. Say, Ben, will we have to go to Boston, if we accept their challenge, and play them?"

"Yes, Punny. They came here, you know, and if we play them, we will have to go there."

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Say, I'm glad of that! I've been wanting to visit the city of baked beans and æstheticism for lo! these many moons!"

"Are you going to accept their challenge, Ben?" asked Pinky Sweet.

"I don't know, Pinky."

"Why don't you know, Ben?" asked Tom.

"I don't like to take the responsibility upon myself. If the rest of the members of the team wish to accept the challenge, I am willing, but if the majority do not wish to do so, I shall not accept."

"Well, so far as I am concerned, I am willing," said Tom.

"And I," from Markham.

"So am I," declared Pinky Sweet.

"I'm in for it, if the rest are," drawled Spalding.

"And you can count on me, Ben!" said Little Punn.

"You're not a member of the team, Punny!" growled Brown.

"I'm not?"

"No."

"That's all you know about it."

"It is, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then tell us what position you play?"

"I'm coach and general manager!"

"A pretty coach and manager you would make!" sneered Brown. "You couldn't manage a team made up of six-year-olds!"

"I couldn't, eh?"

"No."

"That's all right; you don't know everything, and if you'll watch me closely, you will see me fool you every once in a while."

"Well, if the rest of you wish to accept the challenge, I am willing," said Ben. "Then I shall write and accept, shall I?"

"Yes!" came the reply in a chorus.

"Very well; I will write the acceptance right away, and mail it."

"When are we to play them, Ben?" asked Tom. "When will we go to Cambridge?"

"They want us to play the coming Saturday."

"Saturday, eh? Well, that will suit us, I think?"

"Yes; as it will give us a chance to get over there and back without losing any time away from school."

"So it will; we can leave here Friday night, get there early Saturday morning, and will be enabled to get five or six hours sleep. Then, after the game, we can come back home, and will have Sunday to rest up."

"I'll go and write the letter, fellows," said Ben, and he disappeared into an adjoining room.

He was gone only a few minutes, when he came back with a letter in his hand.

"I'll go and mail this," he said, "and then we'll——"

Little Punn jerked the letter out of his hand.

"No you won't!" he grinned. "I'll go and mail it, myself, see?"

"All right," smiled Ben, and the little chap hastened out of the room.

He was gone only a few minutes, as he hurried, for he did not wish to miss any of the conversation relative to the game of basket ball which was to be played with Harvard, at Cambridge, on the coming Saturday.

"We must put in some solid practice between now and Saturday," said Ben. "We want to be in good form when we go over there. If we are not in our very best form, we are liable to be beaten, for you may be sure those fellows are on edge."

"You know it, Ben!" said Dickinson.

"They would not have sent the challenge, otherwise," from Markham.

The youths discussed the matter at length, and then retired for the night, this being Tuesday evening.

The next afternoon, Ben got the freshman team—which consisted of Tom, Spalding, Markham, Pinky Sweet and himself, together in the gymnasium, and a game was played with the scrub team, which was made up of some of the best players that were in the college, outside of Ben's team.

Ben had instructed the members of the scrub to play their very best ball, and they did so, the result being that it was a hotly contested game, Ben's side winning by the score of 14 to 2.

"Let's rest awhile and play another game, fellow," said Ben. "What do you say?"

The others were willing, and they rested half an hour, taking just enough exercise walking about the gymnasium to keep from catching cold, and then they lined up for another game.

This game, like the other, was warmly contested, but Ben's team won with ease, although the score was more even than in the first game, being 18 to 10.

"Well, we have had some good practice, anyway," said Ben, as they left the gymnasium, after having donned their street clothes, and were crossing the campus.

"Yes," replied Tom. "Of course, the scrub team isn't Harvard, but it plays a good, strong game, and we put it over it in good shape."

"So we did. Well, it is good enough, so that it will put on edge, all right, and that is what we want."

"There goes that Ben Bright gang!" growled Geoffrey Marvin, who, with his cronies, happened to be crossing the campus at the same time Ben and his friends were crossing.

"Yes; they've been practicing basket ball in the gym.," said Bert Rogers. "Harvard has challenged them to a return game."

"Is that so, sure enough, Bert?" asked Marvin.

"Yes; on the square, it is."

"When do they play?"

"Saturday."

"Here?"

"No; at Cambridge."

"Say, Harvard won't do a thing to that outfit!" said Marvin, a look of delight on his face. "They'll shut Ben Bright's gang of cronies out!"

"On what do you base your calculations, Geoff?" asked Rogers.

"Oh, on nothing in particular, save that I know the Ben Bright aggregation won't be in it with the Harvard five."

"What makes you think it won't?"

"Oh, everything. It can't rank with the Harvard fire."

"You think it can't?"

"I do."

"That's funny, in view of the facts. Have you forgotten that the Ben Bright aggregation, as you call it, played one game with the Harvard five in Madison Square Garden, and not only beat it, but shut it out?"

"No; I remember that, but the win was by a fluke, in my opinion."

"By a fluke?"

"Yes."

Rogers laughed ironically.

"Geoff., I gave you credit for better judgment than that!" he said. "You know there was nothing of the fluke order about the Ben Bright five over the Harvard five. It was a good, closely contested game, and Bright's five won on its merits."

"I don't think so!" said Marvin, doggedly.

"I don't see how you can say that, Marvin," said Sanders, who happened to be in the crowd, although he did not train with Marvin and his gang all the time; "I don't fancy that outfit any more than you do, but I must say that I think they won that game from Harvard strictly on their merits. They do play a hot game of basket ball."

Marvin grunted out something unintelligible. He hated to acknowledge that the others were right. He hated Ben Bright so bad that he was not willing to give him credit for anything at all, but Rogers and Sanders, while being enemies of Ben Bright, were more fair-minded.

"Well, let that go," said Rogers; "I will say that I hope Harvard will do them up, this time, anyway."

"Oh, they'll do Ben Bright and his gang up, all right, you may be sure of that!" said Marvin. "They sent the challenge, you know, and they would not have sent the challenge unless they were sure that they could defeat Bright's team."

"That is very good logic, Marvin," agreed Sanders. "I think, myself, that Harvard will win, this time, and do it easily, and I am going to go over there Saturday, and see them do it!"

"And so am I!" declared Marvin.

"Here, too!" declared Henry Dudley.

"I'm in on that!" said Don Ross.

"And so am I," from Dick Wilton.

"I hope Harvard will shut Ben Bright's gang out, and not let them score at all!" growled Geoffrey.

"I'm with you in that," declared Sanders.

"Harvard will never shut Ben Bright's team out!" said Rogers. "You can safely bet on that."

"Well, I'm not going to bet, one way or the other!" said Marvin. "I've lost enough money, as it is, and I'm going to quit."

"You have no kick coming, though, Marvin," said Rogers, coolly. "You lost a thousand, up at Lake Kensico, when you bet that Walcott would beat Ben Bright skating, and then kicked out of it."

"That was a little streak of luck," grinned Marvin. "I'm glad we didn't have time to put up the money. If we had done that, the money would have been gone."

"That's no lie!" said Don Ross.

"It's hard to keep from betting when that little runt of a Little Punn is around, though," said Marvin. "He is

so confoundedly impudent that a fellow can hardly keep from taking him up on some of his bluffs."

"They are not really bluffs, either," said Rogers; "he is always ready to put up his money, and he means business, all the time."

"I wonder if many of the students will go over to see the game?" remarked Henry Dudley.

"I heard quite a number say they were going," said Rogers. "I think there will be quite a crowd."

"And when will they go?"

"Friday night."

"Shall we go along on the same train?"

"Of course, why not?"

"Oh, I hate to let those fellows know I am interested enough in them to go anywhere to see them play."

"Yes, but you go in the hope of seeing them beaten; they know that, so it will be all right, and to see you along, will grind them, rather than make them feel good."

Marvin looked pleased.

"I guess you are right," he said. "Well, we will go on the same train, and in the same car, and let it be known that we hope they will be beaten. There will be some satisfaction, anyway."

"Yes, but I should advise you not to say too much, as some of Ben Bright's friends are rather excitable, and might slug you on the ear!"

"That's about all they are—sluggers!" growled Marvin.

"They are basket ball players as well as sluggers," said Rogers. "I was down watching them practice, just now, and I must say that the way they put it all over the scrub team was a caution."

"Bah!" sneered Marvin; "the scrub team can't play basket ball. Any old five could beat them."

"That's where your off, Marvin. The scrub is all right, and it puts up a hot article of ball, too. There is no use trying to get around the facts in the case; Ben Bright has a crack basket ball team."

"Wait till Harvard gets at his team, and you'll see how 'crack' a team it is! Harvard'll crack it, all right, and do it in short order!"

"Don't forget yourself, and bet too much money on it!" warned Rogers.

"Oh, I'm not going to bet any more; that's settled!"

"I'd stick to that, if I were you. Sure things are often uncertain, and the only safe plan is to keep your money in your pocket."

"I would like to get even with that little runt of a Little Punn, though!" said Marvin. "I'd like to win my money back."

"That is what makes all the fellows who gamble and

lose go broke in the end," said Rogers. "They keep on betting in the hope that luck will turn, and they will win back what they have lost. Better kiss it good-bye, and quit short."

"That's good advice," said Sanders.

CHAPTER IX.

AT HARVARD.

Ben's basket ball team kept up its daily practice until Friday, and the youth was sure the members of the team improved with each day's practice.

"I don't see how Harvard is going to beat us," he said to them; "I know they expect to do it, but I don't believe they will be able to do so. If I do say it myself, who perhaps should not, being one of the players, we have about the best team I ever saw."

"I think you are right," said Blues Brown. "If Harvard beats the 'Three Chums' Five, she will have to hustle!"

"That is right!" agreed Rhyme.

"Harvard may win at basket ball,
May beat the 'Three Chums' Five;
But'll know she's been to a game, that's all!
That's as sure as you're alive!"

"She'll never win the game!—don't think of it!" said Little Punn. "The 'Three Chums' Five has got the game cinched. And I am going along to coach it, and root for it!"

"Well, that is enough to insure the defeat of any ordinary team!" sneered Brown. "Ben's team may win, however, even though handicapped in such a manner!"

"That's all right; it isn't dunce-capped, as you have been, all your life, Brownie!"

Interest in the game which the "Three Chums" Five was to play against the Harvard 'Varsity Five on Saturday had grown apace, until by Friday evening large numbers of the students had made up their minds to journey to Cambridge with the team, and see the game.

Dorothy Dare and Mamie Blair, and about a dozen of the Barnard girls had decided to go, also, and Ben had made arrangements for their comfort by securing a sufficient number of berths in a sleeper for their accommodation.

"It would never do for the 'Three Chums' Five to go and play a game of basket ball, and one of the chums be

absent!" said Ben, when talking to Dorothy about it. "And that one is the most important one of the chums, too!" he added. "You are our mascot, Dorothy, and we could not win without you!"

Of course, Dorothy laughed at this, and made fun of the idea, but she was pleased, just the same, and was delighted to know that she was to go to Cambridge and witness the game.

A big crowd was at the Grand Central Station that Friday evening—a good-natured, jolly crowd of Columbia and Barnard College students.

At last their train was announced, and they made their way through the doorways, and were soon on board the splendid through train for Boston. It was a New York, New Haven & Hartford train, and was one of the finest and fastest trains running between New York and Boston.

"Let's see, this train goes through New Haven, doesn't it?" remarked Little Punn. "That's where the sons of Eli hold forth."

"That is the abiding place of the football team that we beat by a score of five to nothing!" said Markham.

"Yes, and we can do it again!" said Little Punn.

"Of course we can!" said Rhyme.

"But we won't get a chance to try again until next fall," smiled Ben.

The train had left the Grand Central Station at 11:30, and it was due in Boston at six o'clock sharp. Ben had planned to go to a hotel, and remain until after they had had an early dinner, when they would go to Harvard, and begin preparations for the game, and this was done. They had breakfast at 11:30, and then the youth, accompanied by Tom, started out with the fourteen girls to see the sights of Boston.

They put in the time, until about half-past ten o'clock, and then returned to the hotel, and got ready for dinner.

The manager of the Harvard basket ball team called at the hotel, and the two had a talk regarding the game, after which the Harvard man left.

The game was due to begin at three o'clock sharp, and Ben's team was on hand at two, as were also the Columbia students, and the Barnard girls. The latter had been given seats of honor, where they could get a good view of the game, and they each and every one had little flags made of the Columbia colors, blue and white.

"Our little mascot!" said Ben, gazing into Dorothy's eyes. "You must do your work well, Dorothy, and don't let us lose the game!"

"You shall not lose it, if anything I can do will prevent it, Ben!" was the reply.

"We are all going to help her, Ben!" said Mamie; "and I

think that we will be able to give you sufficient help so that you will win."

"I hope so, Mamie. I don't see how we can lose, when we have you girls to work for our sides!"

"And here I am, too, Ben! Don't forget me!" said Little Punn. "I'm in the mascot business, too, you know, and while I am not quite so good at it as Dorothy, still I am not to be sneezed at!"

"True, Punny; I had forgotten you. You are all right, and with you to aid the girls, I think we will come out on top of the heap."

"There is not the slightest doubt, Ben. Why, if you had a few more like us, you wouldn't need to play at all; we could win it for you, without your doing anything!"

"If mouth-work would do it, Little Punn would win the game by himself!" said Brown, who always felt like saying anything bad about Little Punn when the girls were present.

"Oh, I don't know that I am any better at the mouth-work, as you call it, than you are, Brownie!" the little chap said. "You're not so slow yourself, when it comes to that."

"Come, come! you must not quarrel!" said Mamie Blair. "We must all pull together in this affair."

"I can't pull when he is around!" said Little Punn. "He would make anything balk! Why, the sight of that mug of his would scare a trolley car off the track!"

Ben laughed and moved away to see if his men were in trim for the coming contest, which would begin in about twenty minutes.

The game was to be held in the gymnasium, and the building was now packed as tightly with students of Columbia and Harvard as a can is with sardines. There was a great deal of excitement in the air, although the spectators were quiet at present.

The Harvard team had been on the floor practicing, and as it came off to let Ben's team go out for practice, the Harvardites gave their college yell:

"Rah rah rah! rah rah rah! rah rah rah—Harvard!"

And now, as the "Three Chums" Five went out on the floor for practice, a cheer went up from the Columbia students, followed by the college yell:

"H'ray! h'ray! h'ray! C-o-l-u-m-b-i-a!"

Ben had watched the practice work of the Harvard five closely.

"They have improved considerably," he said to Tom; "they are in much better form than when they played us in Madison Square Garden. We will have to work to beat them."

"I think so myself," coincided Tom. "Well, we will beat them anyway. I think we have improved, too."

"You are right about that, old man; we are playing better basket ball than we played then, but I don't know whether or not we have improved as much as they have."

"We could not, for the reason that there was not so much room for improvement. We were playing in much better form than they, at that time."

"Yes, so we were."

The five youths—Ben, Tom, Spalding, Markham and Pinky Sweet—went to work and warmed up, doing some lively practice work, and after fifteen minutes of this, they stopped, and preparations were made to begin the game.

Presently the two sides lined up, and the referee took his place midway between the baskets, and a little to one side of the two centres—those being Ben, for Columbia, and Burr Rowell, for Harvard.

This fellow, Rowell, was a new one on the team; at any rate he had not played with the team when it was in New York, and Ben was destined to find that in him he had a foe-man worthy of his best efforts.

The referee had the ball in his hands, and after a few words of instruction regarding fouling, etc., he tossed the ball into the air. Up it went, and then as it came down up shot the two youths to meet the descending ball, and both struck it at the same instant, with the result that it shot up into the air again, and again they leaped up to meet it. Crack! went their hands against the ball, but Ben was a trifle the quicker, and the ball twisted out sideways, and went rolling along the floor toward Markham, who seized it and tried to toss the ball through the basket for a goal, but the ball was knocked out of his hands by the Harvard guard, and the opportunity was lost.

Then the game went on at a merry rate. The ball was here, there and everywhere, sometimes in the hands of Ben's players, and sometimes in the hands of the Harvard players. For several minutes, however, neither side was able to score, and then one of the Harvard men made a beautiful overhead toss when running, and scored a goal.

It was as beautiful a piece of work as any one would wish to see, and the cheer that went up from the Harvard students almost raised the roof of the gym.

"Oh, we'll win!" cried an excitable Harvard sophomore; "we'll win in a walk. Why, as compared with our fellows, those Columbia men are lobsters!"

"Is that so?" remarked Little Punn, coolly, he happening to stand near; "have you anything that says your men will win?"

"You mean will I bet on our fellows?"

"That's what I mean."

"I certainly have! I'll bet you a hundred that the Harvard five wins the game!"

"All right; and I'll bet you nine hundred more, if you like."

Little Punn was so cool that the other looked at him doubtfully.

"You don't mean that you will bet a thousand dollars on your team?" he asked.

"I certainly do," was the quiet reply; "and here is the stuff that says so," and he held up a big roll of banknotes.

"Wait," the Harvard youth said; "I haven't so much money, but I can get it. Give me five minutes."

"Ten if you wish."

"I'll be back here with a thousand dollars in five minutes."

The youth began moving about among the Harvard students, pausing to speak to first one, then another of them, and each of those spoken to invariably went down in his pocket and produced some money. The result of the youth's trip was that when he returned he had the sum mentioned, and the two thousand dollars was placed in the hands of a responsible person.

Sanders, Marvin and their crowd were well pleased when the Harvard man scored the goal.

"That is two for Harvard!" said Marvin, in an exulting tone of voice. "Harvard is going to win!"

"They are starting out well, anyway," said Sanders. "I hope they will keep up the good work!"

"They'll do it!" declared Henry Dudley.

"One goal doesn't cinch a game of basket ball," said Bert Rogers. "Wait, fellows."

"Oh, you always want to wait!" sneered Marvin. "It isn't so much the two that that goal netted Harvard, as it is the manner in which the goal was made that goes to show that Harvard will win. That was a phenomenal play."

"A phenomenal accident, I should say," said Rogers. "He couldn't do that again in a hundred years."

"So far as that is concerned, I guess Bert is right," acknowledged Sanders. "That was more of an accident than aught else."

"Well, it is an accident such as none of Ben Bright's gang will make, so it counts, all right!" growled Marvin.

"Oh, dear! they have scored!" Dorothy gasped, as the ball dropped through the basket. "That is too bad!"

"Oh, it is only two for them," said Mamie, cheerfully. "Ben will score before long, never fear!"

"I hope so!"

The ball had been brought back to the centre by the referee, and the game started again. The ball was soon being knocked hither and thither at a great rate, and after

a minute or so of rapid play, Ben got a chance and snapped the ball toward the goal of the opposing five. It was a beautiful throw, and the ball looked as though it was going into and through the basket, but instead, it hit squarely on the edge of the circular iron frame, and bounced back into the air a distance of several feet. Down it came, and striking the iron frame, bounced back into the air a second time, then as it came down the Harvard guard leaped up and knocked the ball away from the basket. Ben had come within a hair's breadth of scoring, but failed, and as the Columbia students groaned in disappointment, the Harvard students yelled with delight.

"I told you they were lobsters!" the Harvard youth with whom Little Punn had made the bet cried. "They can't score when they get a chance!"

"I'll bet you another thousand that they win the game, just the same!" said Little Punn, promptly. "You'll see whether or not they can score before the game ends. Put up or shut up!"

But the Harvard youth did not care to bet any more, and had nothing to say in reply.

"Oh, that is too bad!" breathed Dorothy. "I wish the ball had gone through the basket!"

"So do I," said Mamie. "Well, maybe we will have better luck next time."

"That was within an ace of scoring!" said Will Rhyme. "Ben will get the ball through the basket next time."

"It's going to be a close game," said Brown.

Sanders, Marvin and their crowd were delighted at the failure of the ball to go through the basket.

"Good enough!" said Marvin. "Ben Bright is not such a very much, after all! He had a good chance and failed."

"Oh, that was not the best chance in the world," said Bert Rogers. "I've seen more favorable opportunities turn up in basket ball games."

"That's all right; he had a whole lot better chance than the Harvard fellow did who made the goal!"

"Yes, but that was by accident, and not by design that the Harvard fellow made it, Marvin."

There was not much chance for talk, however, as the game was now going at a lively rate. The ball was here, there and everywhere, and presently Pinky Sweet got it. He made a feint, as though to throw the ball over the head of the guard, who was a tall fellow, and then as this fellow threw up his hands to intercept the ball, Pinky Sweet suddenly ducked—having held to the ball, instead of throwing it—and darting between the tall fellow's legs, tossed a goal almost before the Harvard men knew what had occurred.

An then a wild cheer went up from the Columbia students.

CHAPTER X.

THE "THREE CHUMS" FIVE WINS.

"Hurrah for Pinky Sweet!" shrieked Little Punn, waving his hat frantically. "Hurrah for Pinky Sweet! He's the stuff!"

And the Columbia students cheered for Pinky Sweet with all their might, after which they gave the college yell, while the Barnard girls waved the Columbia colors wildly.

"Oh, that was just splendid!" cried Dorothy, her face flushed with excitement and delight. "That was splendid of Pinky! He is a good player for such a little fellow, isn't he?"

"Indeed, he is!" agreed Mamie. "Only a little fellow, one who is quick as a cat, could have done that. It was a cute trick, and it won."

"Say, that's a foxy little chap!" said one of the Harvard spectators. "He fooled Langworth, all right."

"So he did," replied another. "He is quick as a flash of lightning, isn't he!"

"He certainly is!"

"The game isn't going to be a jug-handle affair, after all, I'm thinking."

"Not on your life! Those fellows can play, all right, and it will hustle our fellows to beat them."

Sanders, Marvin and their cronies were looking down their noses.

"That long-legged kangaroo of a guard is a lobster!" growled Marvin. "The idea of him letting Pinky Sweet dodge between his legs, and toss a goal! He had better hide out!"

"That was a foxy play, all right!" said Rogers, with a grin. "Pinky is a great little player, and he is 'heady,' and don't you forget it. What he lacks in size, he makes up in brains, and in quickness."

The brilliant play of Pinky Sweet disconcerted the Harvard players not a little, and they were nettled at having the score tied, when they were anticipating nothing of the kind.

"That was all right, Pinky!" said Ben, with a smile. "You did that nicely."

The little chap flushed with pleasure; he was always glad to receive praise from Ben.

Again the referee tossed the ball in the air, and again the play was resumed, and both fives played with desperate energy, each seeming to be determined to get in the lead.

It was about an even thing, and it was plainly evident to even the eyes of the Harvard students that their team had met its match, and that if it won, it would have to play the game of its life.

The play was watched in eager silence by the adherents of both teams, and it seemed as though neither side was going to be able to score again in the first half. Near the end of the half, however, a Harvard player, owing to an unlucky fumble by Markham, succeeded in making a goal, and the game stood four to two in Harvard's favor. It stood this way at the end of the half, as the time was up before play could be resumed.

"Well, they are playing a strong game to-day," said Tom, as the five went to their dressing room for the short time that is accorded between the halves for resting.

"Yes, they are playing a stronger game than they played at Madison Square Garden," said Ben.

"They have four, while we have but two," said Markham, "and it is my fault. I had to go and make a fumble, just at the wrong time!"

"Oh, well, we all make errors," smiled Ben, "and it always seems as though it is just at the wrong time. It could not be helped, Markham. Don't worry; the game isn't over yet."

"That's right; they haven't won it yet," said Pinky Sweet.

"And if each of us will do as well as Pinky has done, they won't win it, either," said Ben. "Four times two is eight; and I don't think they will make four more."

"We'll try hard to keep them from doing so!" said Tom, with a determined air.

When the time was up they returned to the gymnasium, and the Harvard five put in an appearance at almost the same time, and they got ready to begin the last half.

Ben was determined to get the first blow in on the ball, this time, and he leaped into the air before his opponent did, and it seemed as though he would keep on going up, so high did he leap. He made his point, for he was enabled to hit the ball, without interference from his opponent, and he drove it to Markham, who was on the alert, and as he was anxious to make up for his fumble which had enabled the opposing team to score the second goal, he caught the ball, made a sudden dash, evaded the guard, and made a quick try for goal.

It was a wonderfully good throw, for it was successful, the ball striking the board back of the basket and glancing downward into and through the basket.

The score was tied! It stood four to four, now, and the

Columbia students cheered wildly, while the girls waved their little banners of blue and white, and added their voices to the general din.

"Oh, I'm so glad Markham scored a goal!" said Mamie. "He fumbled before, and caused our side to lose the other time, but he has evened things up now!"

"That is a fact," agreed Dorothy. "I'm glad he did it, too!"

"Now will you be good!" cried Little Punn to the Harvard students who had been exulting over the fact that their team was ahead during the time between the halves. "Now what have you to say?"

The students in question had nothing to say, and the little chap was jubilant.

"We are the people!" he cried. "We are all right, and don't you disremember it! We are going to win this game!"

"Wouldn't that jar you!" growled Marvin, as Markham made the goal. "Jove! I was in hopes they would not be able to score at all in this half."

"So was I," said Sanders; "but I begin to think it is anybody's game."

"You are right, I think, Sanders," said Rogers; "it is anybody's game. To my mind it is about an even thing."

"It's Harvard's time to score now, anyway," said Dick Wilton. "If they can keep that up, and score first, each time, and catch Ben Bright's gang short on time, at the last, they will win."

"Yes, 'if!'" said Rogers. "They'll win, if they win, you might as well say, and be done with it."

The game was now becoming exciting, and everybody was on the qui vive. Perhaps the most excited persons in the gymnasium were the girls. They wished that Ben's team might win, and they watched the play with eager eyes.

"Where is your great Ben Bright, is what I would like to know!" said Marvin, sneeringly. "He hasn't scored yet, although Pinky Sweet and Markham have. Why doesn't he do something?"

"He hasn't done anything remarkable that I have seen," said Sanders.

"He has made a number of brilliant plays," said Rogers; "they were plays that kept the other fellows from scoring, and he is entitled to as much credit for making them, almost, as though he had made so many goals. He came very near making a goal, too."

"Say, Rogers," said Marvin, sneeringly, "if I were looking for an apologizer for Ben Bright, I would know where to look, all right!"

"Meaning me, I suppose?" coolly.

"Yes; you could do the job better than any of his own crowd could do it, I am confident!"

"I am simply giving Ben Bright the credit which is his due, that's all, Marvin; you are unwilling to do so, on account of your dislike for him."

"That sounds very nice; but I can't see that he has done much, and I have pretty good eyes, I think."

"I'm afraid I shall have to disagree with you, Marvin, if you say that you haven't seen Ben Bright do anything as yet," said Rogers, coolly.

The game had been resumed, now, and they stopped talking, to give their undivided attention to the play.

This was lively, indeed, as both sides were playing as though their lives depended on the issue of the game. Some wonderful plays were made, and first the Columbia students would cheer, and then the Harvard students would have their turn.

It was lively, and very exciting, and when presently the Harvard team succeeded in scoring, the Harvard students nearly raised the roof.

"Good! Good!" cried Marvin. "Now what do you think, Rogers? Harvard is going to win!"

"Maybe so," was the cool reply. "It is by no means a settled thing."

"That's all right; I think I see the Ben Bright gang's finish!"

"But your eyesight is not to be trusted!" said Rogers, quietly.

"Goodness!" murmured Dorothy; "that puts them ahead of our team, doesn't it! Oh, I do hope we will make a goal, right away, and even things up!"

"Don't you fret; Ben's side'll score before very long!" said Mamie.

The Harvard student who had the bet with Little Punn was delighted.

"What do you think, now?" he asked, turning to Little Punn. "We've got you fellows faded, now!"

Little Punn hauled out his roll of banknotes, and shook it in the other's face.

"I'll bet you a thousand you haven't!" he said, quietly.

"I haven't the money, or I'd go you, too quick!" the Harvard youth growled. "I'd win your money, too!"

"Aber nicht, as the Dutch say; which is another way of saying, 'I don't think!'" with a grin.

The game was now on again, the ball having been brought to the centre and put into play, and all eyes were on the players. It was a close and exciting game, and none wished to miss any portion of it.

The last half of the game was half gone, and the Harvard team had scored six points, while Ben's team had scored

but four, and Ben felt that they would have to play hard if they would win. He set the pace himself, and the way they went to work, now, was a surprise to the Harvard players, who had supposed that their opponents were incapable of any more fierce and aggressive game they had already been playing; and the result was that Spalding succeeded in getting the ball through the basket for a goal, after a couple of minutes of fierce playing. This evened up the score, and set the Columbia students to yelling and cheering for all they were worth.

"Who's all right?" cried Little Punn, waving his hat; "why, the 'Three Chums' Five is all right!" and the other Columbia students took up the cry, and cheered for the 'Three Chums' Five, for Ben Bright, and for Spalding, who had just made the goal for his side.

"Oh, we are even with them—goody! goody!" cried Dorothy. "Now, if we could only score again, we would win, I am sure!"

"I think our side will score again!" said Mamie, with supreme confidence.

"What do you think about it now, Marvin?" asked Bert Rogers, who, although an enemy of Ben Bright, seemed to take a delight in worrying Marvin. "The score is even again, and Ben Bright's team is playing the best basket ball."

"I don't see it!" growled Marvin. "They are only even, and Ben Bright has done nothing, as yet. He's no good; a regular lobster!"

But Ben Bright was soon to prove that he was far from being a "lobster." The ball had been put in play again, and the game was going on fiercely. The end of the half was drawing dangerously near, and if either side were to score in the next minute or so, the other would hardly have time to get even again, as the half would be at an end before they would have a chance to score.

Presently all the players came together in a sort of scrimmage, and as one of them tossed the ball up, and it came down again, three or four hands struck at it at the same time. Being struck on four sides at once, and near the bottom, the ball again shot straight up into the air, and as it came down Ben gave it a quick upward stroke, and knocked it into and through the basket for a clean goal.

Instantly pandemonium reigned, the two hundred Columbia students making as much noise as a thousand, seemingly.

"The 'Three Chums' Five wins!" cried Little Punn; "there won't be time for further play. The Three Chums' Five wins!"

And his prophecy came true. The ball was put in play,

but the game had progressed scarcely a minute before the time was up.

The half and game was ended, and the "Three Chums' Five had won by the score of eight to six.

It had been a very closely contested game throughout, and the spectators had been highly entertained. The Harvard students were crestfallen, however, for they had confidently expected that their team would win.

The cheers were given for the "Three Chums' Five, for the freshman class of Columbia, for Columbia, and last, but not least, for Dorothy Dare, one of the "three chums," and the mascot of the team.

Little Punn coralled the one thousand dollars and was very happy; not so much over the winning of the money, however, as over the fact that Ben's team had won the game.

"Now will you be good!" he said to the student from whom he had won the money. "I told you we would beat you!"

The Harvard youth had nothing to say in reply.

Ben congratulated the manager and captain of the Harvard team on the magnificent game they had put up.

"It was a vast improvement over the game you played when you were in New York," he said. "You gave us a hard tussle, this time."

"So we did," the manager said; "but that does not quite satisfy us. We had hoped to beat you."

"Well, you came as close to it as I cared to have you come," with a smile.

The Columbia players and students, and the Barnard girls took the five o'clock train for New York, and were soon bowling along homeward. They were happy, and sang college songs with great energy.

Ben, Tom and the players were in the same car occupied by the girls, and talked of the game as the train sped onward.

"You did your work well, little chum!" said Ben to Dorothy. "You are a success as a mascot! Whenever you act for us, we win!"

"I am glad of that, Ben!" with a blush. "I am afraid, though, that it is not I who make you win, but your own wonderful playing."

"I know, but your presence, and the knowledge that you, our mascot, are there watching us, inspires us to greater efforts than we would otherwise put forth, and the result is that we win, where otherwise we might lose."

"I am glad, if that is the case, Ben!" with a smile.

"And didn't the rest of us do anything in the way of being assistant mascots, to help win the game, Ben?" asked Mamie, with a mock injured air.

"Oh, yes, Mamie; you did lots!" said Ben. "You all did your parts, and did them to perfection.

"And don't forget me, Ben!" said Little Punn, swelling out his chest. "I'm the boss mascot of them all, I am!"

"You're all right, Punny!" laughed Ben.

"Yes, he's all right with his mouth!" growled Brown.

"Old Jealousy!" said Little Punn, with an air of supreme scorn. "I wouldn't have your disposition for a farm, Brownie!"

"Well, I'd hate to have yours!"

Jollity reigned supreme all the way back to New York, which city was reached at a quarter past ten o'clock. Ben and Tom escorted the girls to Barnard College, where they arrived at a quarter of eleven. Then, bidding the girl good night, the youths hastened back to their apartments on Amsterdam avenue.

"What's the matter with the 'Three Chums' Five?" asked Little Punn, as Ben and Tom entered the parlor, where the others were awaiting them.

"Nothing! The 'Three Chums' Five is all right!" was the cry, in chorus.

* * * * *

Monday morning Ben Bright received a letter from his guardian, Lawyer Shepard, of Syracuse, which contained bad news. The bank in which all the money belonging to himself, Tom and Dorothy, the "three chums," who were "all for one and one for all," had been deposited, on their guardian's recommendation, had failed.

"You may get a portion of your money back, a small per cent. of it," Mr. Shepard wrote, "but it will be only a small portion, and for a year at least, even that will be un-

obtainable. What will you do? If you wish to continue in college, I will pay the cost of the course."

"Impossible!" said Ben, grimly, when he had read this aloud to his companions; "I could not think of doing that. I shall go on the road again with my play, 'Three Chums,' and at once! I could not content myself here during the rest of the term, under such circumstances. I shall quit college, immediately, and go to work and make some money of my own before going to college again!"

"And Dorothy and I will do the same, Ben!" said Tom True, earnestly. "We are 'three chums,' you know, are 'all for one and one for all,' and we will stand and fall together, will stick to each other through thick and thin!"

THE END.

The next number (51) of "Three Chums" will contain "THREE CHUMS ON THE ROAD AGAIN; OR, TOURING IN A PALACE CAR," by Harry Moore.

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